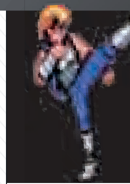
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THE EVOLUTION OF THE GOD SIM

MALCOLM EVANS
TRASHMAN'S CREATOR IS THE LATEST CASTAWAY TO REVEAL HIS FAVOURITE GAMES

BARGAIN HUNT
EVERY GAMES MACHINE LISTED
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THE RETROBATES

MOST EXPENSIVE GAME



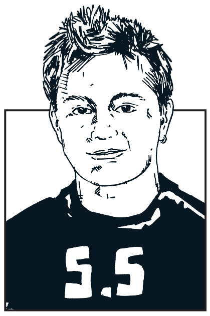
DAVID CROOKES

Most of the games I've bought have been regular price, but I did buy a Nintendo 64 just to play *GoldenEye*. Of course, I ended up buying many other classics for this underrated machine as well
Expertise: All things Amstrad CPC, *Dizzy*, *Broken Sword*, Atari Lynx and PlayStation
Currently playing: *Total Recall*
Favourite game of all time: *Broken Sword*



ASHLEY DAY

Mega CD Snatcher cost me £40 even though it was covered in scratches. Some called me mad but the cyber-punk adventure was so enthralling that I didn't care
Expertise: Games that nobody else seems to like
Currently playing: *Beats Of Rage*
Favourite game of all time: *Shining Force III*



SPANNER

The Mega Drive's *Street Fighter II* touched the 50 quid mark, which was a ridiculous price, but what're you gonna do? Not buy it? It's *SFII*, for f*ck's sake!
Expertise: Mathematical formulation of quantum mechanics
Currently playing: 3D Hoop & Stick Simulator Extreme
Favourite game of all time: Hide The Parsnip



JOHN SZCZEPANIAK

Sapphire: Ginga Fukei Densetsu on the Turbo Duo. Overrated considering the price, thankfully I sold it a month later for a tiny bit more than I paid.
Expertise: Obscure games
Currently playing: *Gunners Heart*
Favourite game of all time: Doukutsu Monogatari



PAUL DRURY

£80 for a boxed, mint Donkey Kong 3 Game & Watch Vs System. Worth it for the cute controllers alone
Expertise: Getting old programmers to confess their drug habits
Currently playing: *Galaga '88*
Favourite game of all time: *Sheep In Space*



MARTYN CARROLL

I'd like to say it was something cool and collectable, but it was actually *Resident Evil 2* for the PlayStation, which cost me £50. I blew an entire week's wage on it
Expertise: Archaic home micros
Currently playing: *Evil Dead Regeneration*
Favourite game of all time: *Jet Set Willy*



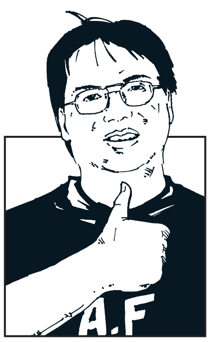
MIKE TOOLEY

Quake 3 on the DC. Game plus Mouse and Keyboard and the old BT/Sega 5p a minute Dream Arena charge. I remember running home from work to grab the phone bill before my wife got there
Expertise: Games that few have heard of and less have played
Currently playing: *Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter*
Favourite game of all time: *Mr Do!*



SHAUN BEBBINGTON

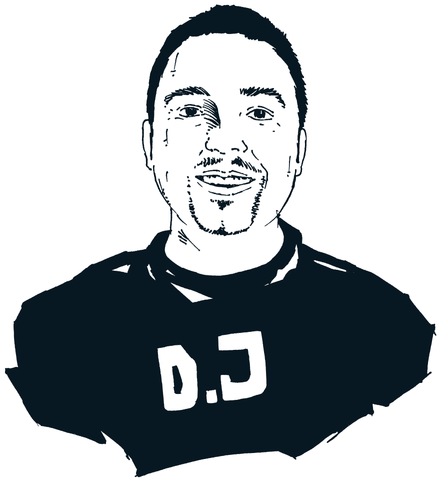
As a child of the 8-bit era, my most expensive purchase was *Turrican* – a whopping £9.99, and a penny less than my birthday spends. I never owned a console so was never ripped off
Expertise: Commodore 64 and other 8-bit computers
Currently playing: *Ultimate New Comer*
Favourite game of all time: *Stunt Car Racer* (C64)



ANDREW FISHER

Super Mario All Stars including *Super Mario World* for the SNES – £35 brand new. A bargain for all that *Mario* action!
Expertise: 25 years of gaming, from Commodore 64 to Xbox
Currently playing: *Super Mario RPG*
Favourite game of all time: *Wizball*

LOADING...



Forget the long hours, critical deadlines and constant writing, working on Retro Gamer is an absolute joy and something we wouldn't change for the world.

As the forum keeps on growing (www.retrogamer.net/forum if you've not yet registered) the praise keeps coming; it would appear that the majority of you are more than happy to see Retro Gamer back on the shelf where it belongs. Never one to rest on our laurels though, we'll continue to keep bringing you the very best from the world of retro gaming. A recent survey on the forums saw many of you requesting more in-depth features, so this issue has a massive eight pages devoted to Ocean Software; check it out on page 34.

We've also introduced a brand new feature this month called Conversion Capers (page 58) which talks to the 8 and 16-bit coders of yesteryear to find out just how they managed (or failed) to get the latest arcade hits into the home computers of the time. It's a cracking piece that we're sure you'll enjoy.

And of course we have all your usual favourites…

Enjoy the magazine.





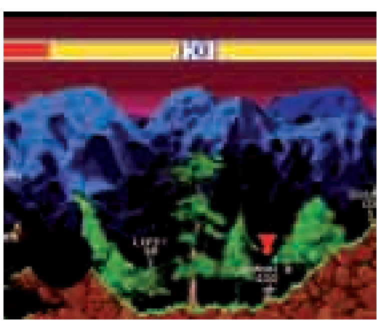
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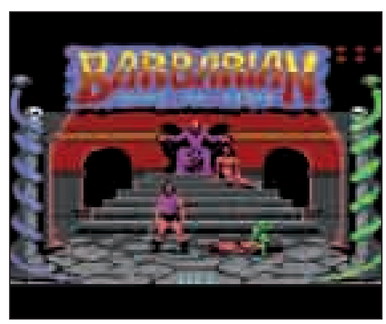


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At-a-glance retro sections…







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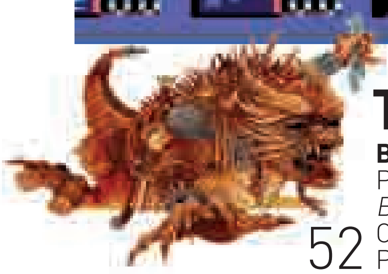
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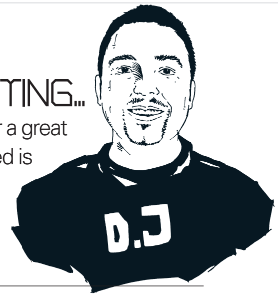
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RETRO RATED

THE GAMES LISTING...

If it's a bumper compilation or a great new remake, then Retro Rated is where you'll find it



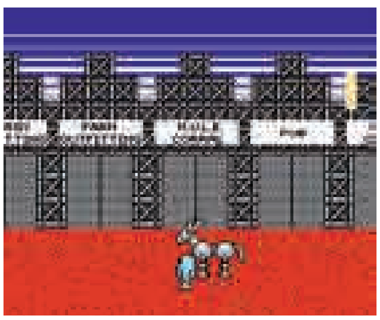
retro GAMER SIZZLER



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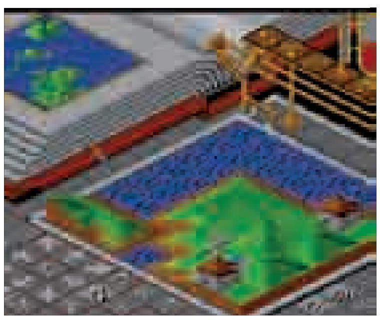
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THE MAKING OF...

M.U.L.E.

70 John Szczepaniak eulogises over *M.U.L.E.* – a game that's far more engrossing, but far more challenging than GCSE Economics will ever be



RETRO FEATURE

GOOD GOD!

74 Retro Gamer charts the evolution of one of the most interesting gaming genres of all time – the constantly evolving God Sim



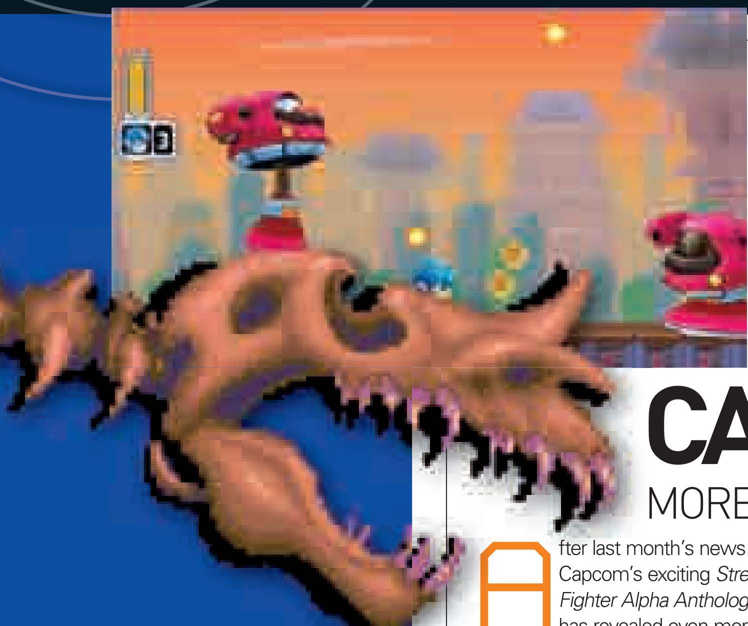
DESERT ISLAND DISKS

MALCOLM EVANS

80 This month's castaway is Malcolm Evans, legendary creator of hits such as *3D Monster Maze*, *Trashman* and *Knot In 3D*

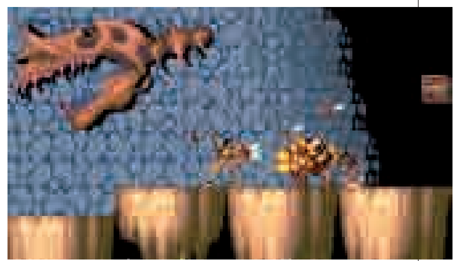
RETRO SCENE

RETRORADAR





» Never mind Mega Man's oversized head; we're just pleased that Capcom is sticking to 2D



» *Black Tiger* is just one of the classic titles due to appear on the delayed *Capcom Classics Collection Remixed*. We can't wait

CAPCOM-PILATIONS

MORE RETRO LOVE FROM CAPCOM

After last month's news about Capcom's exciting *Street Fighter Alpha Anthology* it has revealed even more retro surprises, all of which will be heading to Sony's PSP.

The most frustrating news is that the superb looking *Capcom Classics Collection Remixed* has been pushed back till June, so fans of *Black Tiger*, *Strider*, *Magic Sword* and *Final Fight* are going to have to wait a few more months.

Luckily, Capcom's other announcements have gotten us a lot more excited, with the best news of all being that its superb four-player beat-'em-up *Power Stone* should be out by the end of the year. For those unaware, this amazingly hectic 3D brawler first appeared on Sega's Dreamcast and an excellent sequel quickly followed. The PSP version will feature Wi-Fi support for two players on *Power Stone*, and four players on *Power Stone 2*.

Capcom's third compilation is *Capcom Puzzle World* and features *Super Puzzle Fighter II*, *Block Block* and the *Buster Bros* collection. While *Puzzle World* is due to be released in the US in the next few months, there's been no news yet of a UK release.

It's not just compilations that Capcom is churning out though, as it's also releasing a brand new update of its first *Mega Man* title, although it's now to be known as *Mega Man Powered Up*. Like Capcom's *Resident Evil* remake for Nintendo's GameCube, *Mega Man Powered Up* is a vastly improved update that will feature new level layouts, suitably enhanced visuals and the ability to play as the game's bosses. There's the option to create your own levels, or download them if you're too lazy, take part in 100 short challenges and face off against two brand new bosses.

That's not all though. Yet another classic franchise is being updated for the PSP, and like *Mega Man Powered Up*, it's looking very, very good indeed. *Ultimate Ghouls 'N' Ghosts* is due out in the US later this year and is already looking like an essential retro remake. Utilising some nifty 2.5D visuals, *Ghosts* is looking amazing and Capcom has included plenty of new abilities to ensure that the gameplay feels nice and fresh. The most notable additions to the series are the checkpoint and save systems that should make the franchise a lot easier to get to grips with. Arthur himself has plenty of new moves including a nifty dash, the ability to fire above and below him and a new skill that allows him to hang off ledges. There's no news of a UK release yet, but it can't be too far off.

It's refreshing to see Capcom giving its back catalogue so much attention lately and, with any luck, it will give incentive for other developers to follow suit. Come on Konami, give us a proper follow up to *Castlevania: Symphony Of the Night* on PSP, you know you want to.

THE GUIDE

What's hot this issue…

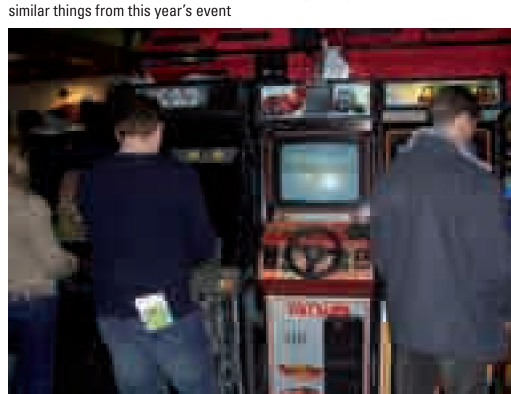
THE NAME GAME

LAST YEAR'S RETRO BALL IS BACK WITH A BRAND NEW NAME

Had you been lucky enough to visit last year's Retro Ball you would have enjoyed a weekend of great gaming, drank obscene amounts of alcohol and rubbed shoulders with the likes of Archer Maclean, the Oliver twins and *Sensible Soccer* creator Jon Hare. It has taken Retro Ball organiser Chris Wilkins a fair while to make an official announcement, but here it is – Retro Ball is returning this year, albeit with a brand new name.

'Retro Fusion: A Weekend Of Gaming' will be taking place on the 30 September and 1 October, and if Wilkins has listened to the few criticisms that were levelled at last year's impressive debut it should be even more enjoyable. The event itself will once again be taking place at The Wardens Cricket Club in Kenilworth, Warwickshire, although this time around the actual proceeds won't be going to charity (last year's profits went to the testicular cancer charity Everyman). There's no news as to which celebrities will be taking part, but judging on last year's show we're expecting some great announcements over the coming months. More news as and when we receive it.

» Last year's Retro Ball was great fun; we're expecting similar things from this year's event



MUM'S THE WORD

ANTICIPATED RPG, MOTHER 3, GETS EVER CLOSER TO RELEASE

Ever since *Mother 3* was cancelled for the N64, fans of the franchise have been in mourning. After what seems an age, new details of *Mother 3* have finally been revealed, and it's looking very nice indeed.



While some will no doubt be disappointed that the game is no longer going to be in 3D (not that it bothers us of course) we're delighted to see that it retains a similar style to the wonderful *Mother 2* (or *Earthbound* as it was better known in the US).

While we know little of the game's actual plot at the moment, we've every faith that its creator, Shigesato Itoi, will be on the ball in delivering a storyline that will give *Earthbound* a run for its money. What we *can* tell you is that Nintendo is preparing to release a limited edition *Mother 3 Game Boy Micro* to tie in with the game's eventual release date, 20 April.

Of course, the biggest question *Mother* fans will want answering is whether *Mother 3* will actually be receiving a UK release. Considering the last two games never made it here, it's difficult to say, but with the DS now leading the way with titles such as *Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan!*, anything is possible.



» Little is known of *Mother 3*'s plot yet, but we have great faith in Shigesato Itoi

LOADING SCREEN OF THE MONTH

NO 5: SHADOW OF THE BEAST

After what seemed like an age of crummy Atari ST ports, the Amiga was finally going to receive a title to push the machine's hardware. Loading up the first disk we were already trying on our free T-Shirt when the loading screen finally appeared – it looked great. Then the incredible music kicked in, then the game finally loaded, then we switched the damn thing off…

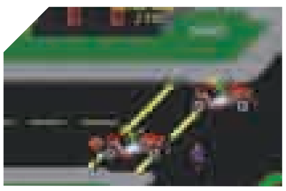


FIVE ALIVE

MIDWAY ANNOUNCES A QUINTET OF NEW ARCADE TITLES FOR XBOX LIVE ARCADE











Don't get us wrong, we love *Robotron, Smash TV, Gauntlet, Joust* and *Super Street Fighter II 'Hyper Fighting*, but we can't help but wish more arcade games were available to play on the 360's Xbox Live Arcade service.

Thankfully, it would appear that Midway has been listening to us, as it's just announced at the recent 'Midway Pulse' event (which took place in Los Angeles last month) that five new titles will be appearing on the service.

Fans of Eugene Jarvis will no doubt be pleased to hear that *Defender* is on the way, and like the other four announced titles, it will appear on Xbox Live Arcade sometime this year. *Cyberball, Paperboy, Root Beer Tapper* and *Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3* make up the remaining games and cover a broad range of genres.

Little has been actually revealed about cost and content yet, but based on the excellent work Digital Eclipse done with the last four games we're hoping it's going to be working on these next five titles as well. If it is we can possibly look forward to enhanced visuals to make the most of the 360's High Definition support, a low price point (although we're guessing *Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3* could well be a little pricier) and some sort of multi-player experience available for each game.

While we're really pleased to see Midway taking an incentive and releasing several titles, we can't help wonder what all the other big hitters are up to? Where are *Space Harrier, OutRun* and *Afterburner* from Sega, or Konami's *Track & Field, Gradius* and *Pooyan*? There are plenty of publishers and developers that have signed up to the service, but we've seen nothing at all yet. Let's hope this problem changes soon, otherwise we may have to consider buying some actual 360 titles…

VILLAIN OF THE MONTH



M. BISON

Without a bad villain there would be no good heroes. What would Superman be without Lex Luthor? What would He-Man be without Skeletor? Rubbish, that's what. This month: *Street Fighter's* M. Bison.

First Appearance: Street Fighter II

Distinguishing Features: Red cape, glowing fist

Weapon of Choice: Psycho crusher

Most likely to: Kick the living shit out of you again and again and again

Least likely to: Ask "can't we just be friends?"

Unusual fact: M. Bison is known as Vega in Japan. Rumours that he was the missing member of the Village People are greatly exaggerated

MILESTONE'S DREAMCAST SHOOTER HEADS TO OTHER SYSTEMS

TOTALLY RAD(IRGY)



» We'll be giving you the low-down on *Radirgy* next month

We've been playing Milestone's *Radirgy* for a fair few weeks now, and while it's not the best Dreamcast shooter we've ever seen, it still manages to deliver a strong challenge that's bound to please fans of the genre.

It would appear that we're not the only people who've been enjoying the cel-shaded blaster, as Milestone has now revealed it will be appearing on both the PlayStation 2 and GameCube at the end of May.

As with its *Chaos Field*, (another shooter that made its console debut on the Dreamcast) *Radirgy* will also be released for both the GameCube and PlayStation 2.

GameCube owners will receive *Radirgy Generic*, while PlayStation 2 owners can look forward to *Radirgy Precious*. It would appear that Milestone has plenty of secret extras planned for both versions, but are keeping many of them a secret. What we do know is that both titles will be featuring Arcade and Original modes, as well as several score attack options that will be specific to each console.

If you can't be bothered to wait, then you can pick up *Radirgy* now from sites like playasia.com or importers such as the Video Game Centre. Alternatively you can wait for the review that will be appearing in next month's Retro Gamer and we'll let you know if it's worth hunting around the Internet for it. From what we've seen it may well be worth a look and we reckon we'll be grabbing a copy come May.

eMag



AMERICA FREE RETRO★

YOUR U.S. TAKE ON THE RETRO SCENE WITH RETRO GAMING RADIO'S SHANE R MONROE



CHOOSE YOUR DESTINY

When I talk about classic gaming with folks around the globe, I find it interesting that we all took a somewhat different 'track' getting to where we are now. The "evolution" of video gaming is very different from country to country – and I thought I'd take this opportunity to tell you about my evolution of videogaming, growing up here in the USA.

My first memory of electronic gaming started in the mid-to-late Seventies when handheld gaming was all the rage. Quite possibly the most prolific handheld of that era was the Mattel Electronic (American) Football – $50 and only rich, popular kids had one. On the playground, the fortunate would huddle in a corner of the building and have a half a dozen or more kids crowded around them. It's hard to believe that this was the springboard to the future …

I started with handhelds. Amongst my early collection were the Parker Bros' *Merlin* and the venerable *Tomy Digital Derby*.

Then the video arcade boom came into full swing. Videogames appeared everywhere here: the arcade, convenience stores, laundry mats (the really bad bootleg arcade games showed up at these), bars and taverns and pizza parlours. My fondest memory of pizza parlour gaming was a local pad that featured a wall game (www.wallgames.com) called *Trapshoot*: a giant flat panel game made of lights and gels that you controlled from your table with this giant brick, single-button controller. Unbelievable.

The late Seventies and early Eighties found me plastered in front of great old-school arcade cabinets like *Gauntlet*, *Tron*, *Dragon's Lair* and many other period pieces – much like everyone else that grew up in the era. It is at this point that we began to take different forks in the road.

Some folks moved to game consoles – the invariable pursuit of the elusive 'arcade at home' experience – the Atari 2600 with graduation to Colecovision or Intellivision with a possible prequel of an Odyssey 2 or Fairchild Channel F. These folks tended to sit out gaming during the big videogame crash around 1984 only to return when Nintendo's NES swept our shores.

But I, as did many others, moved to computers. Here, Commodore ruled the roost in the Eighties. The C64 became the best selling computer of all time and some even speculated that one in three homes had a C64. Some folks chose the 'Atari' route – which took them from the 8-bit Atari 400/800 through the Atari ST where they eventually ended up shifting to PCs in the Nineties. Others tried to hold on to Apple II – and the Macintosh came to pass which created the niche Apple market. But in my circle, Commodore was where it was at.

For computer owners, 1980 - 1985 were the golden years of gaming. The consoles were confused, churning out crappy games sealing their own fate. Game developers jumped ship to code some of the best games of computing history; companies like the then cool EA released their best titles establishing its legendary foothold. Fresh upstarts like Epyx brought us masterpieces. The magic of the diskette showed how cartridge games like *Lode Runner* could be expanded into full construction sets. Forget exclusivity – money was made by cranking out ports to EVERY platform possible.

Once the NES hit our shores, the tables turned. Another fork appeared – one leading to consoling again, the other to 16-bit computing. For many, the idea of consoling again made sense and the C64 was their last computer until picking up a PC in the early Nineties. The rest of us moved on to 'niche computing' with Amiga, Atari ST, and even the Apple IIGS or the Macintosh. I took Amiga and enjoyed another golden gaming era as the 16-bit computers showed off arcade perfect ports of *Marble Madness*, *Arkanoid* and many others.

Console folks had even more forks in the road. Brand loyalty and fierce competition fuelled the fire. NES folks tended to stay loyal



SHANE R MONROE IS THE PROUD OWNER OF POPULAR INTERNET RADIO SHOW, RETRO GAMING RADIO. HEAD ON OVER TO HTTP://WWW.RETROGAMINGRADIO.COM IF YOU WANT TO CATCH HIS LATEST SHOW.

to Nintendo, following the NES with SNES and the Nintendo 64. Another group ended up with the Sega Master System and followed the ragged race of Sega with Genesis/Mega Drive, Sega-CD and some even hung out long enough for the Saturn. It is pretty safe to say that the Sega crowd tended to jump ship to the PlayStation while the Nintendo-loyal stuck with the N64. A new generation of console wars began and the struggle went worldwide.

Here in the USA, I stayed with computer gaming until the Sega Dreamcast where I finally re-entered console gaming. Games with such soul! I was hooked! I eventually got a PlayStation, where *Crash Team Racing* held my family in its clutches for some time.

I currently have a PS2 and GameCube, along with a house full of Nintendo DSs and a GP2X handheld. The PSOne and the Dreamcast are still in operation in our extra room and in the shed I still have my Amiga CD32, which I break out once a year for a perfect game of *Deluxe Galaga AGA*… That's my path, what's yours?

Keep it retro!
Shane

GAMEPARK REVEALS TWO NEW CONSOLES



TWO CONSOLES IN THE HAND ARE BETTER THAN… ONE

It would appear that fans of gaming on the move are going to need coats with bigger pockets as Gamepark has two new consoles on the way.

First up is a re-designed version of Gamepark's XGP (Extreme Game Player) sporting a sleeker design, a 4" screen, a DMB TV receiver and the ability to use Wi-Fi. It will be equipped with 64MB of NAND memory and like the GP2X will be able to use SD cards.

Hot on its heels is the XGP Mini. While it sports similar specifications to the XGP, the XGP Mini has 32MB less RAM, but will supposedly sell at a cheaper price. Interestingly, the two new machines have nothing to do with Gamepark Holdings (which split off to publish the GP2X) and it's still unknown if both machines will be open source. If the recent failure of the Gizmondo and Tapwave has taught us anything, it's that the PSP and DS are becoming firmly entrenched within the gaming public. Now a tinier version of the GP2X on the other hand sounds a lot more tempting. More news as and when we get it.



» Handheld gamers will be forced to choose between the XGP and the XGP Mini, or get both

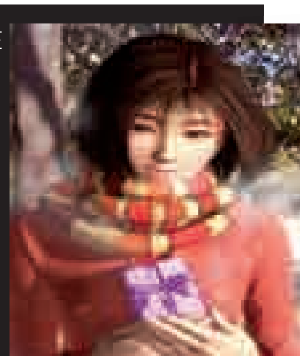
FANS OF SEGA'S SHENMUE FRANCHISE ARE DEALT YET ANOTHER BLOW

THREE'S A CROWD

Realistically, it's highly unlikely that Sega will ever make a third part to its *Shenmue* franchise. Of course, being the Sega fanboys that we are, we remain stupidly optimistic. We're still hoping for a sequel to *Panzer Dragoon Saga*; we're trusting that arcade versions of *Sega Rally* and *Daytona* will appear on Xbox Live Arcade and that the PSP will have a 2D version of *Sonic* to put the original Mega Drive game to shame. Like many though, our biggest desire is to witness the end to the story that Yu Suzuki started on Sega's Dreamcast.

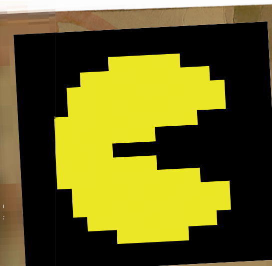
You can just imagine how excited we were then when the official *Shenmue* site re-appeared after four-years, promising that new content would be on the way. Forums were abuzz with rumours. Sadly, as with many stories that start with Shen and end with Mue it soon became obvious that not everything was as it first appeared…

The site was being operated by a Spanish fan, who was hoping to revitalize interest in his beloved gaming series. Needless to say, once everyone knew what was happening the poor lad in question was effectively stoned into Internet oblivion and his site has been down ever since. Still, at least we've got *OutRun 3* to look forward to…





HERO OF THE MONTH



PAC-MAN

Every month, *Retro Gamer* looks back at a classic videogame hero. This month it's Namco's inimitable Pac-Man.

First Appearance: *Pac-Man*

Distinguishing Features: Well he's yellow

Weapon of choice: Power Pills

Most Likely to: Sprout legs and arms and appear in 3D

Least Likely to: Marry a ghost

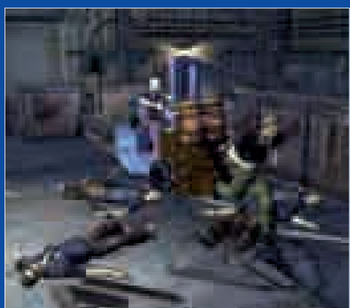
Unusual fact: Pac-Man's name originates from the Japanese slang word 'paku-paku', which means to eat. It was also known as Puckman, but Americans felt this sounded too naughty and changed it.

retro* GAMER DIARY

THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO…

Just because Retro Gamer looks to the past that doesn't mean that there aren't games and events to look forward to. Every month we'll be listing suitable games and events that you be adding to your 'to do' list.

EVENT HOSTING retro* GAMER
IF YOU WANT RETRO GAMER TO PROMOTE UPCOMING GAMES AND EVENTS, CONTACT US AT RETROGAMER@IMAGINE-PUBLISHING.CO.UK



APRIL '06

FINAL FIGHT: STREETWISE

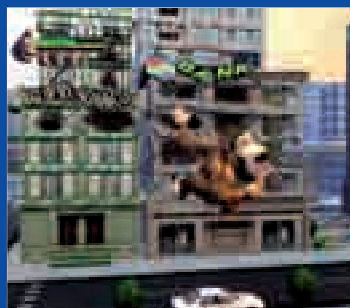
Released: 07 April

Publisher: Capcom

Price: £39.99

Format: PS2, Xbox

We've not made our minds up over Capcom's brawler. We still don't like the style of it, but if anyone can make this game great then it's Capcom. *Devil May Cry*, *Viewtiful Joe* and *Street Fighter* all feature wonderfully designed combat mechanics, so here's hoping *Final Fight: Streetwise* plays more like these and less like *The Bouncer*.



APRIL '06

RAMPAGE: TOTAL DESTRUCTION

Released: 07 April

Publisher: Midway

Price: £39.99

Format: PS2, Xbox

Yes, the graphics look nice and cartoonish, and we're sure that smashing up anything you can lay your giant fists on is going to be a lot of fun, but for how long? If *Rampage: Total Destruction* turns out to be an AAA title, we'll happily eat our hats, but considering the original game was so lame, we'll reserve our judgement.



APRIL '06

TRIZEAL

Released: 20 April

Publisher: Datam Polystar

Price: 7,749 Yen (Import)

Format: PS2

Trizeal was initially released on the Dreamcast early last year (to somewhat mixed reviews). Most recent Dreamcast to PS2 conversions have received plenty of extras, so we're hoping that *Trizeal* will follow a similar trend. Hopefully all will be revealed in a month's time. In the meantime, we'll be practicing our high scores on the Dreamcast version.



APRIL '06

TETRIS DS

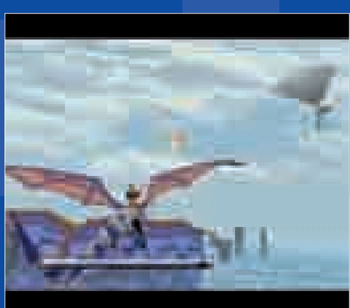
Released: 21 April

Publisher: Nintendo

Price: £29.99

Format: Nintendo DS

How can this possibly fail? Not only is it an update of one of the greatest puzzlers of all time, it contains plenty of classic Nintendo characters and a huge array of different gameplay modes. Best of all though is the ability to finally take your skills online and challenge up to nine other players in a battle for supremacy. April can't come soon enough.



APRIL '06

SEGA AGES VOL. 27: PANZER DRAGOON

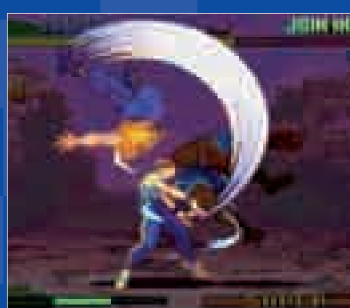
Released: 27 April

Publisher: Sega

Price: 3,448 Yen (Import)

Format: PS2

Here's a memo Sega. Include all three games from the franchise, don't allow 3D ages to update any of them (use Smilebit instead) and if they are going to be ports, make sure they're the original Saturn versions. That's not a lot to ask is it? This has the potential to be one of the greatest releases in the *Sega Ages* range, let's just hope Sega doesn't mess up!



JUNE '06

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA ANTHOLOGY

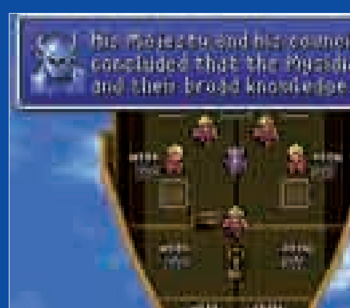
Released: 02 June

Publisher: Capcom

Price: £39.99

Format: PS2

We love Capcom. Not only does it release constantly innovative games (the incoming *Okami* looks amazing) it also showers plenty of love on retro gamers. After last year's wonderful *Capcom Classics Collection*, its new *Street Fighter Alpha Anthology* is looking like another essential purchase. All four *Alpha* games are included as well as the wonderful *Pocket Fighters*.



JUNE '06

FINAL FANTASY IV ADVANCE

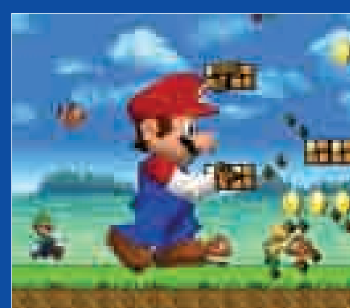
Released: 02 June

Publisher: Nintendo

Price: £29.99

Format: Game Boy Advance

Now this is how you should remake a game. It's been released in the US for a while now, but this superb adaptation of the hit SNES game is nearly with us and looks great. Featuring a terrific translation, new enemies and dungeons and plenty of little tweaks, this RPG looks utterly essential and should appeal to those who played the original or just enjoy classic RPGs.



JULY '06

NEW SUPER MARIO BROS

Released: 07 July

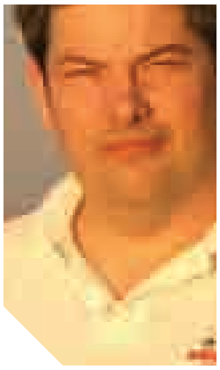
Publisher: Nintendo

Price: £29.99

Format: Nintendo DS

Nintendo is keeping its cards close to its chest, but based on the few screenshots we've been privy to, *Super Mario Bros* is already looking mighty special. It's also a return to the *Mario* games of old and sees the two plumbers racing across brightly coloured 2.5D landscapes in a delightful homage to the old NES and SNES adventures. Roll on July.

eMag











» The infamous trousers down scene was inspired by a friend's unfortunate experience in a karate competition.



» *IK+*'s secrets intrigue gamers even today, 20 years on from its release

"THE KANJI SCRIPT ENGRAVED ON THE BIG WOODEN JAPENESE TORRI GATE DOESN'T TRANSLATE INTO ANYTHING" ARCHER MACLEAN

COMMENT

TEN STEPS TO HEAVEN

MUSINGS FROM THE MIND OF MACLEAN

All good games have a few Easter Eggs and cheats in them, but *IK+* was full of 'em – about 45 in fact. Most are well documented, but to this day, nearly 20 years later, I still get asked unusual questions about the game. With this in mind, here are ten pieces of trivia that most people aren't aware of:

1) I've been asked so many times where the inspiration for the *IK+* backdrop came from so here's the answer – there were actually two sources! One was an animation called '*Carla's Island*'. Professor Nelson Max created it at Lawrence Livermore labs in the US using a Cray 1 supercomputer. It had a rippling sea with a moving sun, a moon cycle passing overhead and simulated all the actual lighting effects. The second was, *Hiawatha's Rabbit Hunt*, a 1941 *Bugs Bunny* cartoon. I remember watching it back in 1986 and noticing a setting sun scene and thinking it would work for *IK+*.

2) The *IK+* scene was entirely re-created in the 2001 PC game *Jimmy White's Cueball World* complete with the music from *IK+*! Sadly the demise of the Virgin/Titus group drowned this.

3) You can make six karate men dance to a beat made up of sound effects by doing a two-stage cheat. Press the space bar to pause the game and get all six men jumping about in synch on the screen (there's two modes). Then press the P key. You should hear loads of sound effects. Press F6 through F10 to speed it up or slow it down. This doesn't work too well on emulators so you're better off using a real Amiga or Atari ST.

4) Why did I put in an animation of the fighters trousers falling down? Easy. On *IK1* for the C64 and Atari 800, I didn't like the static look of the game if you didn't do anything and there was no background scene animation. So to give it a bit of life, the fighters occasionally try and attract the players' attention by looking out of the screen and beckoning you, or their trousers fall down. You can also force this by pressing T. This all came about because at the time I went to see a friend compete in a karate tournament and half way through a round his kit fell down round his ankles.

5) The sound track for *IK+* goes on for around ten minutes, and to debug it I needed a way of 'fast forwarding' it rather than sitting there and waiting. To use it you must type F,A,S,T but hold the last T down; the music will then speed up.

6) There are dozens of messages and animation triggers in *IK+*. Typing FISH, PERI, PAC, BIRD and WORM will cause a variety of short animations to appear. The PAC one was because I was a big fan of Atari's *Pac-Mania*, while the inchworm animation is from Atari's *Millipede*. It also serves the purpose of clearing up all the cherry blossom leaves that fall down from the tree on the right of the scene. If it didn't appear, they'd all pile up and crash the game or something …

7) The invincibility bug is a genuine bug. It's actually due to the pause mode incorrectly resetting a timer and an 'ignore' flags for each fighter. Normally when one has been knocked out they have to wait a few seconds before they stand up again, and the AI's hit-detection ignores attacks on them during that time. Seems like I didn't re-enable it after the pause mode had been exited. This only works for the rest of the round you are in.

8) D,A,T,E shows up a message of which version of the game you are playing. I made a number of magazine review copies with unique messages identifying which reviewer/magazine it went to – handy for working out who was first to leak it… But if you check it out on the production version it says 20th Dec 1988. This was notable for being the day before the Lockerbie tragedy.

9) *IK+* messages shown on the screen from the Judge can be in English or German. Type in G,E,R,M or U,K to toggle between them. This was done because of a German friend called Axle who was totally mad about *IK1* before it, and offered to do the translations. I don't think anyone has ever proof-read it though so it could be slagging of the EEC for all I know…

10(a)) Anyone ever notice that the fighter's shadows actually slant away from the position of the setting sun? Pause the game with the space bar and observe the slanting shadows. Or type in S,L,A,N to see a slanting text message. I mention this because I devised a super fast and simple way of generating shadows for anything that appeared in the area just above the shadow area. It was a neat effect for the time.

10(b)) The Kanji script engraved on the big wooden Japanese Torri gate doesn't translate into anything. Its just random pixels I drew at the time.

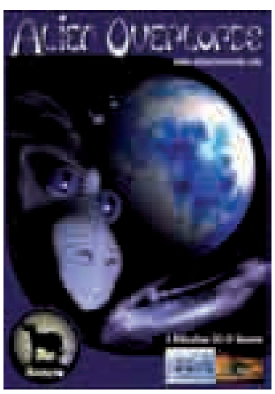
eMag





GAMES VAN DIE BOSVELD

JOHN SZCZEPANIAK RETURNS TO THE AFRICAN CONTINENT AND HIS HOMELAND, DOCUMENTING HOW VIDEOGAMES HAVE CHANGED OVER THE YEARS AND ALSO REVEALING THE ORIGINS OF HIS FASCINATION WITH GLOBAL GAMING. JOIN US FOR SOME BOEREWORS AND MIELIEPAP AS WE REMINISCE NOSTALGICALLY ABOUT A FORGOTTEN PAST.



Reminiscent of *Star Control*, this is the poster to another locally developed PC game: *Alien Overlords*

Below: The very first issue of NAG (under the old management), alongside a more recent issue. It's the only games mag produced locally, with imports like Retro Gamer costing around R100 and up (about £10+)



Groete almal! (Greetings everyone!) Videogames in South Africa, or "TV Games" as they are commonly referred to, didn't really have an official presence until around 1994 with the arrival of the new government. Prior to this there were heavy trade sanctions. Though foreign governments intended these to be detrimental to the country, they had the opposite effect on gaming. With no official PAL support from corporations like Atari and Nintendo, local people out of necessity did things their own way and so a flourishing grey import market began. Only the best was shipped over from America and Japan, making for exciting times. This was enhanced by an influx of Chinese and Hong Kong immigrants (this was before Hong Kong was handed back to communist China). South Africa had a comparatively easy policy on immigration and Asian newcomers abounded, bringing with them Asian trade routes and plans for businesses. This resulted in one of the most interesting and highest quality bootleg markets in the world. It became an exotic urban blend of the globe's finest gaming elements, against a backdrop of South Africa's beautiful veldt and high-tech metropolitan sprawls.

If unusual bootleg retro items are the things that make you perspire, then South Africa is one of the world's hot spots. Increasingly zany Famiclones are predominant, but whilst there I also found monochrome Game Boy multicarts containing upwards of 64 entirely different titles, without duplicates. Mega Drive bootlegs were not as common, but they were of an extremely professional quality. Keen eyes though would be looking for the more unusual hack-jobs, and home-brewed titles brought from the East.

The bootleg scene dominated the 8-bit market. While there are reports that Sega's SG1000 console was officially sold there, I personally never saw one. Nor was I able to find anyone who had; if you were growing up in South Africa your first system was inevitably a Famicom clone. Other early systems were scarce agrees Matt Benic. "I had a friend with one of the older Atari systems, but it was an import and hellishly expensive in those days. There were others with Commodores and the like, and while there was a number of those systems around, they certainly weren't commonplace." So the affordable and easy option was to opt for variations of Nintendo's console.

Appearing in the late Eighties, South Africa had a wide range of decent clones including an exclusively local model, the Reggies Entertainment System. Reggies stores are equivalent to Toys R Us, although when contacted regarding their history of dealing with illegitimately manufactured and/or grey imported videogames, they kept silent. Shelf to shelf, videogame stores were painted with the paradisiacal spectacle of thousands of different pastel-coloured import cartridges, all beaming with cheeky Japanese text and artwork. Diverse multicarts were available alongside cheap single games, and not only Japanese titles. American 72-pin games were reformatted to the 60-pin Famicom standard, while some FDS-exclusive floppy disk games were converted to cartridge. The nice thing was pricing, which allowed school kids to have wonderfully gluttonous playing schedules.



Toxic Bunny by Celestial (later becoming Twilyt), is a locally made PC game. Featuring ultra-smooth scrolling and fast action, it's free to download from The-Underdogs website



"IT BECAME AN EXOTIC URBAN BLEND OF THE FINEST GAMING ELEMENTS, AGAINST A BACKDROP OF SOUTH AFRICA'S BEAUTIFUL VELDT AND METROPOLITAN SPRAWLS"

LOCAL TALENT

What made South Africa an exciting videogame region was not that it developed countless unquestionable classics, rather that it was a magical point of fusion for many different elements from around the world. Even so, we do have our own creations.

Visitors to www.remakes.org may know *IOX*, a remake of Kinetic Design's *Into Oblivion*, done by a trio of South Africans: ex-patriot Justin Paver, open source aficionado Diorgo Jonkers, and C64 fanatic Andrew Paterson.

One of the earliest "commercial" developers was Celestial/Twilyt, who developed *Toxic Bunny* for PC. It was due to release an RTS called *Zulu Wars*, but went bankrupt. Another is Mooncow (*Alien Overlords*), but it also folded. Currently the only console developer is I-Imagine who made *Chase* on the Xbox; they recently retrenched their workforce. There are also some mobile developers, and a website dedicated to games development in the country: www.sagamedev.co.za. Despite valiant attempts, things remain sparse.



Above: *Iox is a superb remake of Kinetik Design's Into Oblivion. Head on over to www.remakes.org for more information*

MANY THANKS TO GREGOR HOUGHTON OF WWW.RETROLOGY.COM FOR THE REGGIES PHOTOS, AND MATT BENIC OF WWW.SMALLFRYMOBILE.COM FOR LENGTHY ASSISTANCE. THANKS ALSO TO MIKTAR DRACON AND WWW.NAG.CO.ZA FOR THEIR SUPPORT, AND ALSO ANDREW PATERSON – REGARDING IOX.

REGIONAL FACTS

NAME
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

LAST EST. POPULATION
44 MILLION (2005 ESTIMATION)

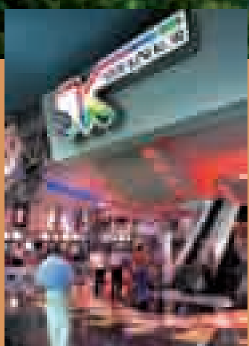
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE(S)
AFRIKAANS, ENGLISH AND 9 TRIBAL LANGUAGES

TIME ZONES
GMT+2

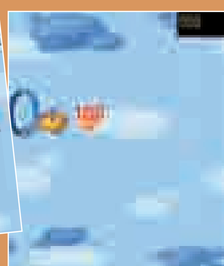
TV TYPE
50 HZ PAL

VOLTAGE
220V

CURRENCY
RAND







Far left: A cinema and video company, Ster Kinekor, distributes PlayStation merchandise and has near total control of today's games market

Left: South Africa took the gold at the WCG's 2005 Grand Final mobile division tournament, held in Singapore, on Chopper Rescue

OFFICIALLY GREY

Legitimate import products began with systems like the SNES, Genesis, Turbo Duo, and if you were rich, Neo Geo. All of them were from Japan or America. With Nintendo turning their back on Africa, modified American SNESs were available with the TV cables and power adapters were replaced by the RSA standard. Regarding Sega, depending on whom you ask, their official PAL presence ranged from minimal to non-existent, though they did vainly attempt officially distributing things like the Mega Drive and Mega CD. Anecdotes recounting tales of walking into stores to buy a Mega Drive and being asked by a salesman, "You want American?! You want Japanese?", while pointing to blaring displays of 16-bit goodness, are accurate.

School children debated the nuances of importing; consensus was that the Japanese Mega Drive was preferable to the Genesis, due to it having better pads. It was only later that I came to realise how unorthodox these views were. Importing wasn't just there to get titles early, it was a way of life, whether you were at school or a serious collector.



Arcades also thrived. Local cafes (pronounced "cafees", where you bought daily commodities like milk and bread) all had arcade machines nestling in the corners. Local youngsters would spend hours whiling away the time practicing on whatever was available. Due to trade relations these weren't always cutting edge; older games were easily found right up until when I left in the mid Nineties. For better arcades one had to venture to large shopping centres, or gambling resorts like Sun City; these had several centres under one roof and tended to feature new releases.

HAIL NEW AGE GAMING

Official support finally began in the mid-Nineties with the arrival of Sony's PlayStation drastically changing things. "Ster Kinekor" (a film distribution company) gained sole marketing rights for PlayStation products. Having a well established brand and exclusivity, coupled with the ability to freely advertise via its cinemas and video rentals meant it soon developed a stranglehold monopoly on the market. The PlayStation eliminated all in its path, and cemented the country as a PAL region. Its huge installed user base means that the PlayStation 2 now has total market control. The Dreamcast and GameCube flopped due to overpricing and dismal support, while the Xbox was never even officially launched. It does have a healthy grey market though.

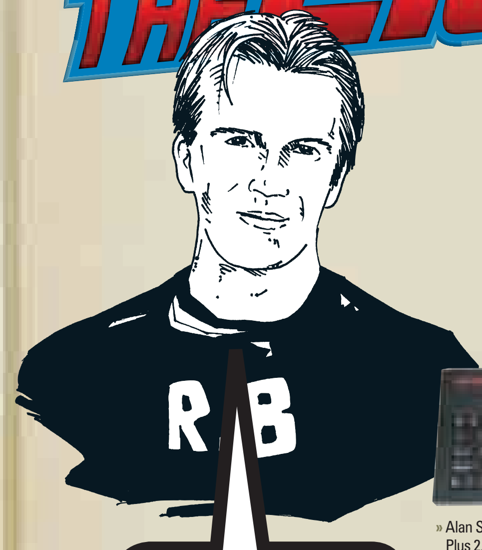
Left: It's sadly missing its box and has seen better years, but the logo is still visible. This is South Africa's contribution to the world of Famiclones!

The only other major officially supported format is PC gaming. The market is said to have nearly collapsed in the mid-90s due to overpricing, but underwent a turnaround that resulted in under-pricing in order for it to grow. According to testimonials South Africa has a higher PC market percentage than other territories, partially due to the extortionate pricing of official console games. Even so, piracy is said to be disproportionately large in both, thanks to high costs compared to the country's average monthly income.

According to Miktar Dracon, "the only gaming magazine in South Africa, that is produced in South Africa" is NAG magazine, which he works for. Other games magazines have been imports from the UK or America, like EGM. NAG re-launched in 1998 having been bought over by new management and is now one of the most popular technology magazines around. They also co-organize the annual "rAge" (really Awesome gaming expo) event every year: www.rageexpo.co.za. South Africa also participates in the World Cyber Games and recently won their first gold, in the Mobile Division. 15-year old Tamaryn Brooke-Smith from the Western Cape won the gold in Chopper Rescue, eventually earning himself $2000, and in doing so, he became the youngest ever winner at WCG.

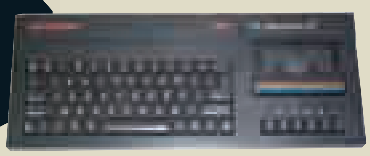
Tot volgende keur (until next time).

BACK TO THE EIGHTIES



THE LATEST NEWS FROM APRIL 1986

In April 1986 there was one story filling the computing headlines: Amstrad buys Sinclair. In the time it took to load *Hungry Horace* came the conjecture and speculation as to what Amstrad would actually do with the brand-name and what the Spectrum would look like after Mr Sugar had given it a facelift…



» Alan Sugar's Spectrum vision for the future, the Spectrum Plus 2. It needed just one thing – a tape counter!

Sinclair Research Ltd, linked with several potential takeover suitors over the previous months, finally succumbed when computing rival Amstrad stepped in with £5 million to buy the manufacturing, marketing rights and the Sinclair brand-name and logos. Amstrad purchased all existing stocks of computers held by Sinclair wiping out the £7 million debt that threatened to bankrupt the company.

Several issues were to blame for Sinclair's eventual downfall. Factors such as intense competition in the home computer market which had ironically been helped along by Amstrad's introduction with the CPC464, led to an ultra competitive computer price war affecting every computer company.

Other contributing factors included the massive over ordering of machines from major high street retailers which were then left unsold and the less than brilliant reliability problems of the Spectrum all contributed to the predictable conclusion. And of course, let us not forget the Sinclair C5 electric car.



» Your exits are here and here, duty free is available from Gloria and we're just about to blast the hell away…

Once the initial upheaval had subsided, Sir Clive was left to concentrate on further research and development. Just three months later he would form a new company, Cambridge Computers Ltd, to resume his computing projects. The development of the Pandora portable, which Amstrad would've been given first refusal on as part of the takeover package, was still under review.

Sir Clive wasn't sitting idly by pondering the future of Pandora though. He still had his fingers in various other techno pies namely wafer-scale chip construction, TV technology and a communications project.

After the dust had settled it appeared the takeover was good news for virtually all concerned. Sinclair Research could get on with what it did best whilst Amstrad could flex its corporate muscle in the high street with a series of new improved Spectrum computers and take a stranglehold over the ailing 8-bit home computer market. The overall winner looked to be the consumers. With an injection of newly designed Spectrum machines at competitive prices and with Amstrad's knowledge of production and manufacturing, this would lead to a much more reliable machine.

The one big loser in the takeover deal was the Sinclair Research staff. An estimated 100 redundancies were made primarily in the distribution and marketing departments. As an aside, by 1997 Sinclair Research employed just one person. No prizes for guessing who that was.

So, the future of the Spectrum looked to be strong with Alan Sugar promising to enhance the computer in a similar vein to his own CPC series. The units were already planned and would be coming complete with built-in tape recorders and disk drives. Amstrad clearly wanted the Spectrum to be pushed forward and a re-branding and remarketing of the system was at the forefront of Alan Sugar's thoughts, closely followed by a few pound signs no doubt.

With an enormous existing fan base and despite Sinclair's monetary problems, the Spectrum was still market leader in the UK home computing market. With one eye on the bottom line Mr Sugar could expect to



» The one and only Crash Smash for the month was presented to the outstanding *Bombjack* from Elite

rake in a hefty return for his Sinclair outlay. Conversely, would this be detrimental to Amstrad's own CPC range? Whatever the outcome, the fickle world of 8-bit computing had just become more stable.

Sir Clive's other baby, the Sinclair QL, didn't look to have such a rosy future ahead. The QL stockpile that threatened Sinclair Research for so long had been purchased in its entirety by Amstrad and would be sold off over time. Furthermore, any machines that were in current production runs would also bought. However, Alan Sugar later remarked that he didn't see much of a future for the machine.

Elsewhere, long suffering Acorn, who over the last year had more than its fair share of monetary problems and takeover news themselves, announced that their losses for the six months previous would be only £2.94 million.

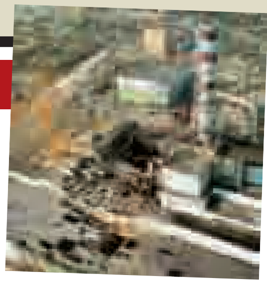
At first that figure looked less than impressive considering the money pumped



» Sir Clive proudly shows the world the QL, one of several reasons Sinclair had succumbed to Amstrad and Alan Sugar

1986

APRIL NEWS





Do you feel lucky? Well, do ya, punk? Apparently he did because on the 8th April Clint Eastwood was voted in as Mayor of his home town of Carmel in California. The *Dirty Harry* star gained a landslide victory polling three quarters of the vote.

The Duchess of Windsor, Wallis Simpson, died on the 24th April. King Edward VIII famously abdicated the throne rather than give us his American divorcee love and the pair left England, lived in exile, later marrying in France. She was laid to rest next to her husband in a low-key funeral attended by the Queen.

At 1.23am on the 26th April, a catastrophic accident occurred at a nuclear power plant in Chernobyl in the Ukraine, a part of the former Soviet Union. During routine maintenance of Reactor Four a massive power surge caused explosions which literally blew the top off the nuclear reactor.

Radioactive clouds were blown across vast areas of Europe giving many countries long-term problems. In Wales farming restrictions, which are still in place, were introduced on many farms after the grazing sheep ate radioactive grass after heavy rains washed the radioactive material from the clouds onto fields.

The total loss of life due to the explosions and the widespread radioactive poisoning was estimated to be in excess of 10,000 people. The World Health Organisation later estimated that approximately 4 million people were affected by the disaster.

Chernobyl remains one of the most radioactive places on the planet.

into the company by Olivetti over the preceding 12 months. But when you consider the £22.2 million loss for the previous year, it appeared Acorn had finally left their financial woes behind them.

Acorn still had one major problem though: they were overly reliant on links with the BBC. In fact, a massive ninety per cent of its turnover was accounted for by BBC endorsed systems. A case of putting all your acorns in one basket?

In the calm waters of gaming, the choicest cuts of software were getting their awards from Newsfield's computing press. Unfortunately April seemed to be a particularly lean month with just a sprinkling of the top notch titles being acknowledged at all.

Crash struggled to rate anything highly this month and rather unusually featured just one game that was Crash Smashable. Still, it was a corker. Elite's all-time classic arcade conversion of *Bombjack* was the sole recipient of the one and only Smash.

Amstrad owners faired marginally better with Amtix! rating just three top games. The



» **Left:** RPG games don't get much better than Charles Dougherty's Questron. **Right:** A game of tactical combat receiving one of two Zzap! Sizzlers awarded to Strategic Simulation Inc. in April 1986

Amtix! Accolades were dished out to *Tau Ceti* (CRL), the Wally Week adventure *Three Weeks In Paradise* (Mikro-Gen) and *Strike Force Harrier* (Mirrorsoft).

Zzap!64-reading Commodore 64 owners had an interesting set of Sizzlers with adventure and strategy being the theme of the month. Sizzledom was bestowed on four titles, *Zoids* (Martech), *Spellbreaker* (Infocom), *Questron* and *Field Of Fire* (both Strategic Simulations Inc). However, the general gaming malaise also infiltrated Zzap!64 with no game deemed good enough to receive a Gold Medal.



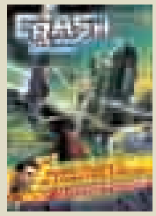
» Mikro-Gen made full use of the Amstrad's colourful mode 0 for *Three Weeks In Paradise*



» Waiting in the hangar with your skimmer, CRL's *Tau Ceti* was a big success on all formats

THIS MONTH IN... CHARTS

Crash Flash



Issue 27 contained a feature on the new Spectrum 128 software releases and this was reflected in the cover artwork with a large Spectrum 128 spaceship being attacked by smaller craft.



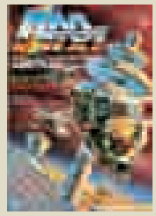
Zzap! Back



This month the cover featured a lot of acrobatic guys. The principal guy had the bonus of having a C64 shooting out of his crotch. Nice. Inside, famous programming icons were taking part in a hi-score showdown, with Jeff Minter triumphing.



Amtix! Antics



The space theme was restored for issue 6 of Amtix! with cover artwork paying tribute to game of the month, *Tau Ceti*. Mr Frey produced a fantasy cover to please gamers and artists alike. Inside was an interview with war gaming specialists Lothlorien.



APRIL 1986



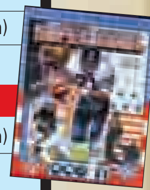
AMSTRAD

1 Spindizzy (Electric Dreams)
2 Way Of The Tiger (Gremlin Graphics)
3 The Last V8 (Mastertronic)
4 Rambo (Ocean)
5 Fairlight (The Edge)



SPECTRUM

1 Green Beret (Imagine)
2 Bombjack (Elite)
3 Way Of The Tiger (Gremlin Graphics)
4 Super Bowl (Ocean)
5 V (Ocean)



COMMODORE 64

1 Super Bowl (Ocean)
2 Uridium (Hewson Consultants)
3 Hardball (US Gold)
4 Ping Pong (Imagine)
5 V (Ocean)

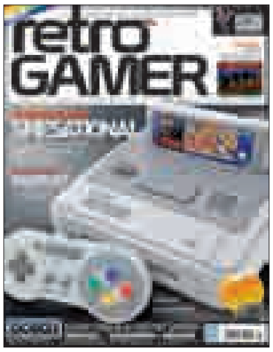
MUSIC SINGLES CHART MARCH '86

1 Living Doll (Cliff Richard & The Young Ones)
2 A Different Corner (George Michael)
3 Rock Me Amadeus (Falco)
4 Touch Me (Samantha Fox)
5 A Kind Of Magic (Queen)



THE RETRO FORUM

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – WWW.RETROGAMER.NET



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STAR LETTER!

Dear Retro Gamer,
What an excellent magazine you always produce. I've been reading it since the first issue and love the new revamped look.
Anyway, before I get too gushy, I just wanted to send you a poem I wrote last year about the good old days I spent playing computer games on my trusty old C64 and I'd love it if you could print it in the mag for others to enjoy.
Anyway, here's my poem. I hope you enjoy it and keep up the outstanding work, Retro Gamer really does rule!

Regards,
Jimmy the retro gaming maniac of Bolton

WHEN THE PIXEL WAS KING

Back in the day,
When the pixel was king,
With my joystick plugged in,
My computer did sing.

It sang with bleeps,
And buzzing sounds,
After the tape had loaded,
And finished going round and round.

My computer was a C64,
A wonderful little machine,
Made by Commodore.
I loved to play games on it,
Back in the day,
Round about 1989 I'd say.
Back then everything was so carefree,
I'd come home from school,
And there I'd be.
Joystick plugged in,
And ready to go,
Soon it'd be time,
To blast another alien foe.

Maybe drive a racecar,
Or knock away the bricks with a ball,
Or leap across a platform,
Over a great big wall.

I still like to play,
Even today,
My C64 sits proudly displayed.

A vintage classic,
A true games machine,
Hours of fun and memories,
It has given me.

You could buy a new game,
For £2.99,
Take it home and then,
Play it all night.

Ahh,
Those were the days,
When the pixel was king,
With a bleep and a buzz,
My C64 did sing.

We don't know what to say Jimmy. You've gone that extra mile, and in doing so you've given us and the rest of Retro Gamer's readership something very special. Have yourself a lovely Fossil Centipede watch for your trouble mate. You deserve it.



EVERY MONTH ONE lucky reader will receive a cool Fossil arcade watch courtesy of those lovely people at Fossil and Atari. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls; failing that, something funny with swear words in it will go down just as well…

GUNNING FOR GLORY…

Dear Retro Gamer,
Wow, great magazine guys, it really is an incredible piece of work that offers just what I'm looking for.

Anyway, have you covered the amazing 2D shoot-'em-up *Jets 'N' Guns* yet? If not (I've not had a chance to read the magazine for ages) then you really should as it's an excellent piece of work. It's probably the most intense shooter I've ever played through and it's been put together by two very talented guys (check out their website at http://jng.rakeingrass.com). It also features some outstanding music by popular Swedish SID-rockers Machinae Supremacy.

In these times of global mega-industry gaming companies, it's refreshing to see the little guys release a great game. Maybe you could cover it in a future issue of the magazine?

Kindest regards, André, Sweden

Thanks for the heads up André, it's a really nifty little shooter and I'm sure we could fit it into the mag somewhere. Now excuse us, we're going back for one more play.





MIND READER…

Hi Retro Gamer crew,
I have just discovered that your magazine is back on the market and I think it's much better than the 'old' version. In your letters section I was reading that many people were demanding the cover disc back so I wanted to say that there are also readers with other opinions.

I never cared about emulators and gaming on PC because I want to play the old games on the original machines, also SID files or ROMS can easily be found on the Internet so



please don't start putting them back in the magazine again, I'd rather you kept the price down.

While I'm here though how about covering any of the following in a later issue of the magazine? Home-brew reviews of the two new Jaguar games that are currently available: *Total Carnage* and *JagMind: Bomb Squad*. Reviews of games such as *Homura*, *Ibara*, *Gottlieb Pinball Classics*, *Radilgy* and *Under Defeat*, a special on Japanese shoot-'em-ups, home-brew games and emulators for Sony's PSP and an article about potential hit games which were in development but never got released (for example *Native* on the Jaguar, *Turrican 3D* and *Planet Harriers*).

Best Regards, Thomas (from Vienna)

Crikey Thomas have you been reading our minds? The current issue looks at a selection of great Saturn shooters, Radilgy *and* Ibara *should hopefully be reviewed in the next issue and last month's Retro Gamer featured the lost Saturn title* Sonic X-Treme. *As for your other suggestions? Well, you'll just have to wait and see…*

COVER-CRAZY…

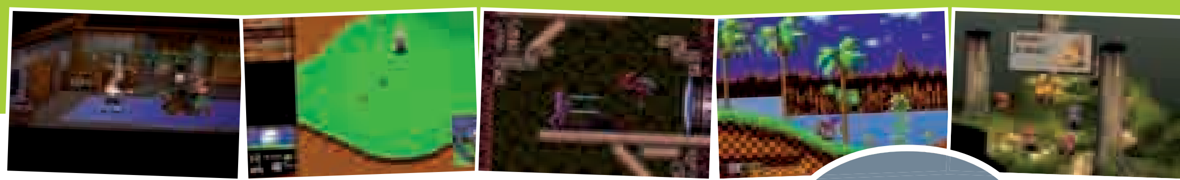
Dear Retro Gamer,

I just had to write in to say that I adored Wil Overton's cover that featured on issue 20 of the magazine, it was absolutely wonderful and I look forward to more work from him. One of the highlights of the magazine for me is the reviews of new home-brew games, as I've very keen on programming new games for old platforms. Surely there is enough information available for you to run a feature on the new cross-platform development tools that programmers, artists and musicians are now using to assist them in pushing the old hardware to its absolute limits?

Cheers,
Mike Hawkey via email

Good idea Mike, we'll try and sort something out for a future issue of the magazine. It would fit into the home-brew section rather nicely.





FROM THE FORUM

EVERY MONTH, RETRO GAMER WILL BE ASKING A QUESTION ON THE FORUM AND PRINTING THE BEST (OR FUNNIEST) REPLIES. THIS MONTH WE ASKED: WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE GAMING FRANCHISES? HERE'S A FEW REPLIES.

ID: Sir Clive

Is it too predictable to say *Final Fantasy*? It's like the Madonna of the game world – it just keeps reinventing itself into something more beautiful than the last. Although sometimes it does suffer from looking great but being the same old same old underneath (just like Madge in fact).

ID: Matt M

It would have to be *Sonic The Hedgehog*. Back in the day, if you had a Mega Drive, you would own *Sonic*. The 2D *Sonic* games are fine examples of platforming at it's best.

ID: eggman

It has to be the *Monkey Island* series, as there are loads of reasons to love the franchise. There are some great characters like Guybrush, Le Chuck, Wally and even likeable cannibals. It features some of the best humour of any game I've ever played. In fact, it's probably the best. Haven't seen many funny games recently, so can't say it has been beaten.

Oh, and it had a great story and gameplay as well. I will always remember the story of Guybrush and his quest to become a mighty pirate, and *Monkey Island* is one the few games to give a true sense of adventure.

ID: merman

Metroid just keeps getting better and better. Now I only briefly played it on the NES back in the 1980s, so my real introduction to it was *Super Metroid*. The big box, the player's guide, the intro sequence… Forget the long post, go read John S's excellent article in issue 19 about why *Super Metroid* is so good. I'll just go and drool over the latest DS *Hunters* screenshots…

ID: TMR

I'd say the *Turrican* series but I only like the first two on C64 and Amiga. *Turrican 3* was okay but rather weak and I didn't get on with the SNES variants at all. I'd also go for the *Gradius* games and its offshoots – lots of good, clean blasty action and nice little variations between formats.

ID: spiff

The *Super Mario Bros* platform games for me. They've never let me down yet – yes, I even loved the turnip-tugging antics of US/Europe SMB2 and wasn't at all disappointed by *Super Mario Sunshine*. Only a few months till *New Super Mario Bros* on the DS!

ID: revgiblet

Tricky one. Most franchises, at some point, overstretch themselves and release a duff title that ruins its reputation. I suppose that the *Championship/Football Manager* games have been consistently good. I also tend to sit up and take notice if a new *Resident Evil* or *Tomb Raider* game is promised.

ID: Ritchardo mkII

The *Magic Knight* series for me! *Finders Keepers* was an excellent little arcade game and was followed by three innovative and compulsively addictive arcade/adventures in *Spellbound*, *Knight Tyme* and *Stormbringer*. Great soundtracks to boot. Best of all – it only cost £11 for the whole lot at the time! Knocks the crap out of Dizzy.

ID: romanista

Is the sensi-style a franchise? The sensible software little men were for me the best series ever, popping up in wars, strange worlds, a train station, the soccer field and the golf court*. When you saw them, you knew were getting a game that focussed more on giving you the best gameplay experience (giving you a whole overview) rather than the best graphics (beautifully zoomed in stuff, which didn't help keeping track of the big picture).

**Cannon Fodder*, Megalomania, *Sensible Trainspotter*, *Sensi Soccer* and *Sensi Golf* respectively

ID: kaiserpc

It's got to be *Ultima* – come on you can even bake bread.

ID: andy vaisey

The *Last Ninja* series on the C64. Although the quality of the games has been called into question in the past (I do love *LN2*, however…) this was the first series of games that I recall, on a personal level, that were a bit like big trilogy films like *Star Wars*. They were well received, sold by the sack loads and made certain coders/graphic artists/composers famous.

ID: RetroBob

I'd have to say the *Command & Conquer* series. The first time I saw *C&C* I was blown away by the amount of control you had over your units, as well as the lovely visuals and sound – considering what I'd been used to with *Dune II* on my black and white laptop sans sound card. At school we spent hours playing this, and each eagerly anticipated sequel – minutes disappeared into hours, hour into days. Who said the Chronosphere wasn't real?

THE RETRO FORUM



LOVE THY FATHER...

Hi Retro Gamer,

I'm a reader from New York and I wanted to take the time out to tell you a bit about my father. First off, the man is a technical genius. Years ago, after burning out the engine on one of his motorcycles, and being inspired by a local arcade, he took the tiny motorbike into our house and configured it to work with our Sega Genesis. It was set up mainly for the wonderful *Super Hang-On*, but it also worked on games like *Road Rash*. He installed a magnet in the kickstarter, which turned on the TV. The ignition turned on the console, while the bike itself was left in a powerlift position. All the wiring ran under the floor and he even installed a volume control and reset button for it. It was an amazing piece of kit and I enjoyed many hours on it. I've long since outgrown it now, but boy, I sure did have some fun on it…

Jonah Schwartz via email

This reminds us of the time someone told us about when they turned their parent's caravan into a Steel Battalion cockpit (we kid you not).
If you've got any send in some pictures next time so we know you're not telling porkie pies…

RETRO RAVER...

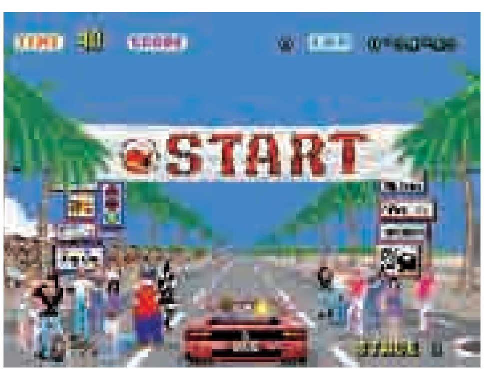
Hello Retro Gamer,

Just want to say that I'm really pleased to see the return of the best magazine ever and I love the new articles, especially 'The Making of…' section. It's really good to read about the history of games and there are plenty of other titles that I'm hoping you'll be covering in the coming months.

How about featuring Manfred Trenz's *The Great Giana Sisters* on the C64? I bought this game when it first came out and loved every minute of it, but a few years later I was having a clear-out and accidentally sold it off with a box of other games for 10p each. I recently re-bought it off eBay, but it cost me nearly £60. I'd love to hear a little more about the history of this amazing game, so anything you could run on it would be greatly appreciated.

Justin Dale, Milton Keynes.

You're not the first person to want more coverage about Mr Trenz's games Justin. Seeing we ran The Making of Turrican *recently I'm sure we'll be able to sort something out for you.*



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BATTY

THE BEST FREEBIE EVER?

- » **PUBLISHER** HIT-PAK
- » **RELEASED:** 1987
- » **GENRE:** PUZZLE
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ZX SPECTRUM
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £1+



HISTORY

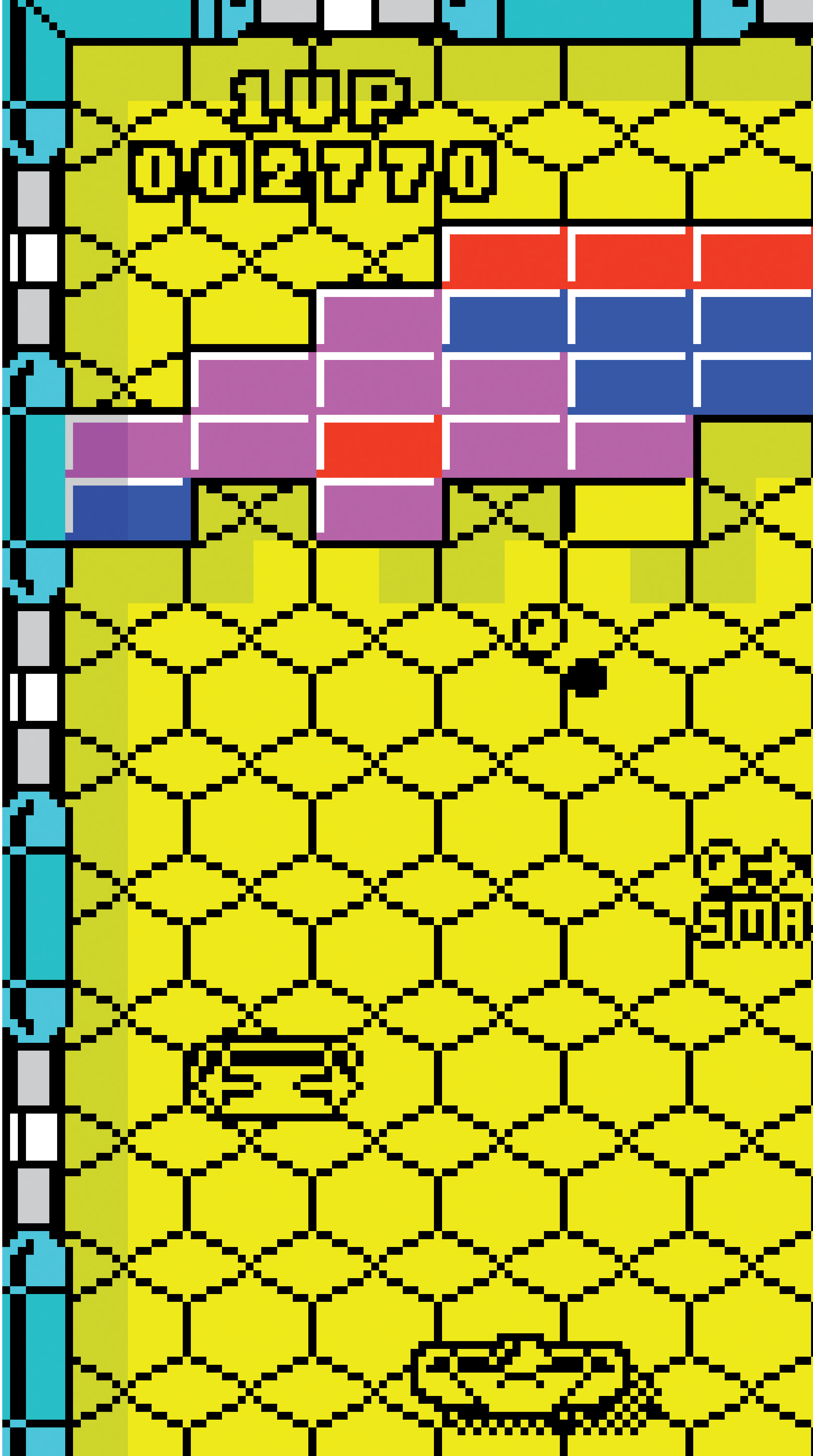
Imagine picking up the latest console magazine and finding the latest AAA hit attached to it. Believe it or not, that's exactly what happened one evening in 1987 when I wandered down to my local newsagents with my best mate, Paul, and picked up the latest issue of Your Sinclair. The game in question was called *Batty*, and to Paul and myself it appeared to be little more than a bog-standard clone of Imagine's recently released *Arkanoid* – how wrong we were…

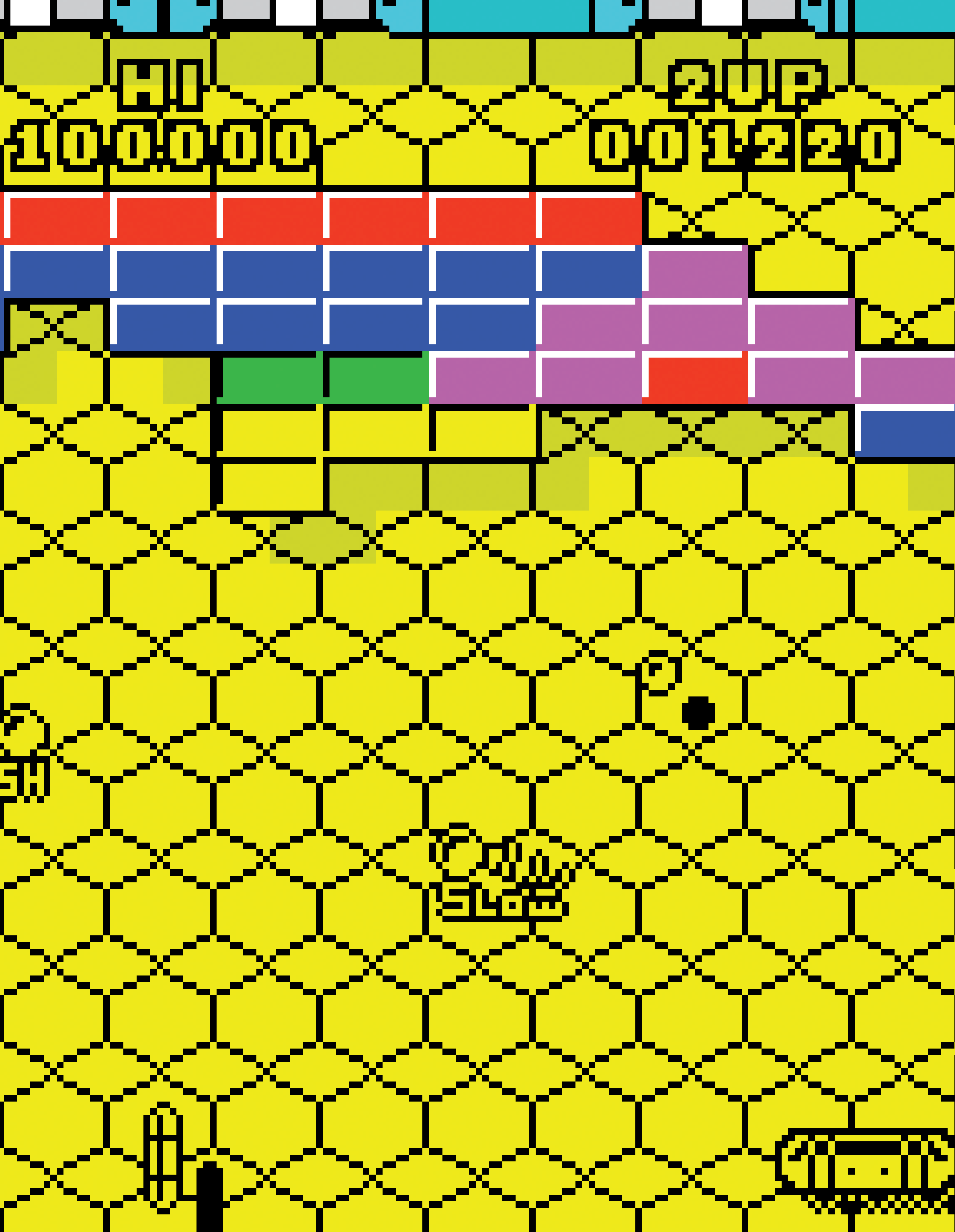
While *Batty* looked and played similarly to the classic coin-op hit, it boasted plenty of smart extras that elevated it above Imagine's full-priced effort. The actual visuals were big bold and chunky and very colourful. The game's many aliens actually retaliated by dropping bombs on you and there were plenty of cool power-ups that ranged from extending the size of your bat, to a handy set of jets that would conveniently boost you to the next, tougher level.

For all its solid level design, bold visuals and gripping gameplay, there was one element of *Batty* that lifted it above all other similar games and made it untouchable – the amazing simultaneous two-player mode.

Rather than take turns, each player simply guarded one half of the screen and shared a set number of lives between them. Whilst this cleverly stopped you from getting your bats mixed up (although it limited the amount of power-ups you could collect) it didn't help the poor sod who was unfortunate enough to let *Batty*'s ball slip past his defences, as he normally got a mouthful of abuse from his team-mate.

Batty didn't stay exclusive for very long as it eventually appeared on a compilation, and at a budget price. While it lasted though, lucky Spectrum owners were treated to something very special indeed. And to think Elite turned down the opportunity to publish it…




HI
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THE MAKING OF...

Worms

Recently touted as a "Matthew Smith for the PlayStation generation" Andy Davidson briefly worked in the games industry before disappearing from the face of the earth. Never one to let a slight disappearance get in the way, Ashley Day tracks down the last great bedroom programmer to chat about Worms...

The story of *Worms* is a 'rags to riches' tale that was common in the Eighties but had become a true rarity with the advent of the 16-bit era. So when *Worms* became a worldwide phenomenon, sellling over five million copies, many gamers were surprised to find it had almost single-handedly been created by one man and his Amiga.

Unaware of what the future held for him, Andy Davidson began work on *Worms* for his own amusement in 1990, some five years before the game's commercial release. "It started life as a version of the old simple tank games that had been around since the 8-bit days", explains Andy. "It was called *Artillery* then and ran on the cutting-edge hardware that was a Casio graph-plotting calculator! It was just an experiment to see if I could get it to do something a bit more interesting than drawing a graph." Moving *Artillery* onto the Amiga meant that Andy was able to expand on the concept. "Giving the player the freedom to move around the landscape, and adding teams, changed the gameplay quite substantially and introduced new levels of strategy to it. That set me thinking about what other elements I could introduce, and the game just snowballed from there."

With the core gameplay in place *Artillery* needed a graphical style that would set it apart from its spiritual ancestors. "I wanted to try and get the same quality of animation and humour into the characters as had been managed in *Lemmings*. It had always impressed me what could be done with so few pixels. I'm a bit of a pixel-art junkie!" After a few experiments in Deluxe Paint, Andy settled on worms as the characters for the game. "Back then they were just about the only type of creature that hadn't been in a game. This was pre-*Earthworm Jim* of course. I wanted something more interesting than tanks or soldiers and they also suited the small size required as I was going to have up to 16 of them in play. The public also had a right to know about the more violent side of a worm's nature, which had so far gone unreported by the media in general."

With the introduction of invertebrates into the game, Andy renamed it *Total Wormage* and kept



» Your annelids can't swim, but they can drown

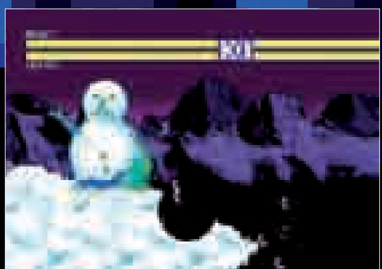


» Weapon drops granted all sorts of fun bonuses





» A mock advertisement for *Total Wormage*, drawn by Lewis Bray, a friend of Andy

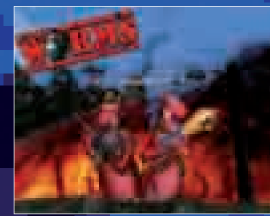


» You'd look unhappy too if a worm blew your arm off

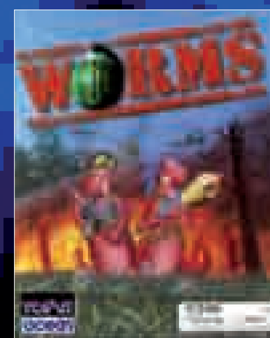


» This early animation sheet shows just how much work Andy personally put into the whole design

IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** OCEAN
» **DEVELOPER:** TEAM 17
» **RELEASED:** 1995
» **GENRE:** STRATEGY
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5+



adding new gameplay elements whilst sharing the work-in-progress version with his college friends. "The aim was to create something where every game was different. Hence the importance of the random landscape generator. I think this is one of the factors that set it apart from most commercial games; it was never intended to have an end. I also tried to make it more of a social game than most. I wanted to actively encourage people to take the piss out of each other, and to wind-up their opponents. It was when my form teacher banned it, because people were skipping lessons to play it, that I actually thought about trying to get it published, which was my dream. Once something gets banned you know you might be onto something."

As *Total Wormage* became increasingly popular with Amiga owners in Bournemouth, Andy realised it had commercial potential and posted a disk to Amiga Format, who were running a game design competition. The judges at Amiga Format failed to acknowledge *Total Wormage*. The ambitious young coder must have been devastated. "It was a bit gutting at the time", recalls Andy, "Not because *Total Wormage* didn't win, but mainly because it seemed to have gone unnoticed. Although the side effect of this was it made me go up to the ECTS tradeshow in London in September 1994 as one last attempt at getting it noticed. I really wasn't expecting anything to come of it though, especially after what had happened with the competition. I booted it up on Team 17's stand saying 'You're probably not going to like this, it's a bit weird'".

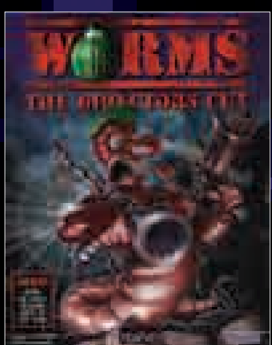
Having already made a game featuring a Lucozade-drinking frog, Team 17 were comfortable with weird concepts and loved *Total Wormage* so much that it signed it up on the spot. Studio founder, Martyn Brown, originally envisaged *Worms* as a budget title but this idea was soon scrapped once the team realised the game's potential. "*Total Wormage* was complete enough already that it was played to death in-house, and was taken round the different magazines straight away. It was their reaction to it, which included not turning the power off in the building so the Amiga could be left on after Alan and Steve took the disks back to Team 17, that decided it was worth a full-price release." Andy soon relocated to Team 17's Wakefield HQ and began refining *Total Wormage*. "It was about 75% done when I showed it to Team 17. There was still a list of things I had left to add to it, such as airstrikes and cluster bombs, but the game was pretty much there. Even down to the speech. I was left to do what I wanted with the Amiga version while Team 17 handled the ports, so I developed it still further, introducing new things such as the sheep and custom levels." With the help of Team 17, Andy was able to add improvements that would not have been possible alone. We asked him which he found most invaluable. "Proper background graphics

"THE PUBLIC HAD A RIGHT TO KNOW ABOUT THE VIOLENT SIDE OF A WORM'S NATURE"

THE MAKING OF... WORMS

THE DIRECTOR'S CUT IS ALWAYS THE DEEPEST

Worms DC was originally meant to be just a treat for Amiga owners, who were denied the true sequel but, as Andy reveals, it was much more important to the evolution of the series. "At the time, *Worms 2* was planned to be the same as the first game, just with a new engine and online, which concerned me a bit. I wanted to make sure it had significant gameplay additions to make it a worthy sequel. I actually funded most of the development of *Worms DC* myself as a chance to try out new ideas. This formed the basis of *Worms 2*, and introduced the new weapons such as the Concrete Donkey, and the ability to draw your own levels inside the game, amongst other things". Not all of *Worms DC*'s changes made it into *Worms 2*, however, and the very rare game is now considered the superior title.





» Oh Yes More Worms was a shareware CD containing 1000 custom landscapes



» While the Blow Torch was a great way of hiding from potential gunfire, it made it much harder to retaliate

for a start. Rico Holmes' trees were a damn sight better than mine! The ambient background and title music that Bjorn Lynne did was also exactly what I'd wanted, but not something I could have done myself. Paul Kilburn's superior worm names were also greatly respected."

Team 17's contribution to development certainly added a more professional sheen to the final product, but part of *Worms*' charm was the personal imprint that Andy made on the game. Two of the most unusual elements of *Worms* were added independently of Team 17 and can now be considered pure Davidson in origin. "The Concrete Donkey was born out of a pub conversation, when I was recalling how as a kid I thought my parents had covered a donkey in concrete and put it on display in the front garden. They claimed it was a common old garden ornament, I wasn't so sure though. So whenever they weren't around I chipped away at it with a stone to see if I could find fur underneath, and therefore prove it was once a real donkey! It seemed only right after that to immortalise it in the game." The Concrete Donkey has become a cult figure amongst *Worms* fans, just as the Sheep easily became the most popular weapon. "The sheep was just something I was messing around with in Deluxe Paint and decided that it had to go in the game somehow, so why not as a weapon? It was the first non-conventional weapon I put in, so that was a chance to try something different. I gave it a set of rules to follow, such as jumping holes and turning round if it got stuck; one of my mates, Ben Wilson, supplied the sound-effect, and the rest is history."

If Andy's personal touch added his unmistakable signature to *Worms* then the wealth of customisation options allowed each player to do the same with their own copies. "I wanted to add to the game's replay value by letting people change things in the game, from worm names to weapon amounts", recalls Andy when asked about the Amiga version's ability to use Deluxe Paint images as backgrounds, "One day when I was doing some screenshots for the

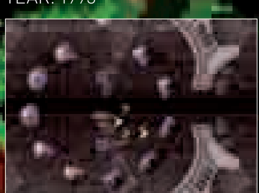
"WORMS WAS ORIGINALLY CALLED ARTILLERY AND RAN ON THE CUTTING-EDGE HARDWARE THAT WAS A CASIO GRAPH-PLOTTING CALCULATOR!"

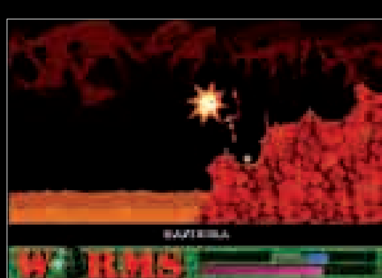
DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

ALIEN BREED
SYSTEMS: AMIGA 500
YEAR: 1991

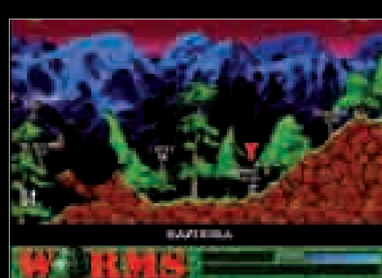
PROJECT-X
SYSTEMS: AMIGA 500, CD32, PC
YEAR: 1992

SUPERFROG
AMIGA 500, CD32, PC
YEAR: 1993



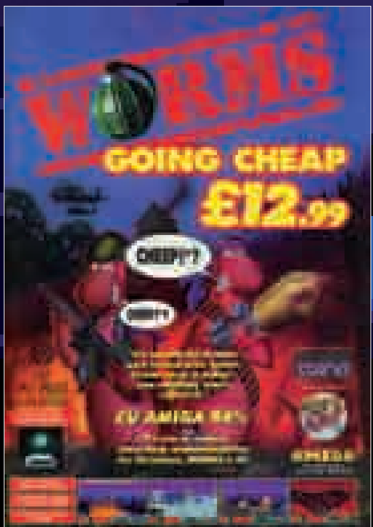


» In *Worms* you could blow up whatever took your fancy

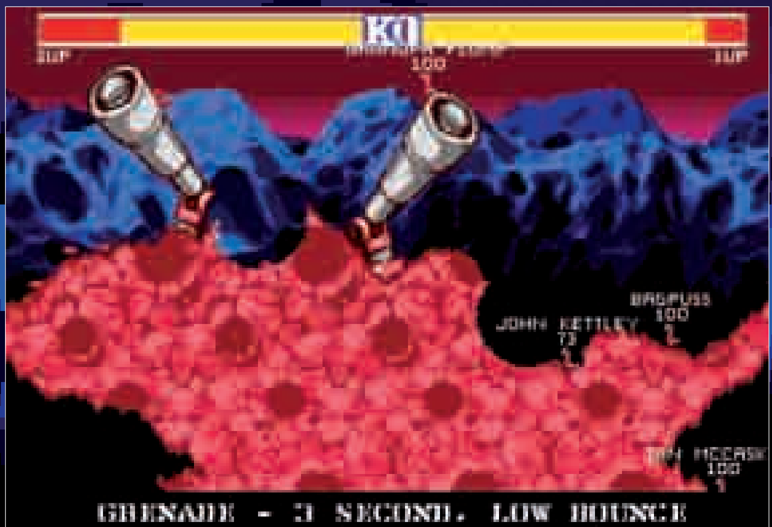


» Three of these five worms are staff members, but which ones?





» A "comical" advert for *Worms*' budget re-release on the Amiga 500



» What other game allows you to kill creatures named after Weathermen? Answers on a postcard…

"I BOOTED IT UP ON TEAM17'S STAND SAYING 'YOU'RE PROBABLY NOT GOING TO LIKE THIS, IT'S A BIT WEIRD'"

game, I thought about reversing the process and importing a ready-made landscape into the game. And then it suddenly hit me, why does it have to be a landscape? So soon I had worms blowing chunks out of the Team 17 logo and Madonna's head. This went down very well at ECTS that year so I decided to leave the ability in. It was great to see so many people make use of that, and upload their levels onto the Internet."

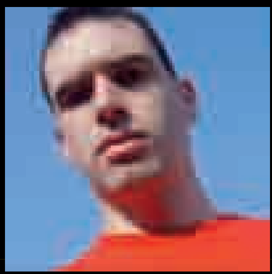
By 1995 *Worms*' five-year gestation was over and it was ready for public consumption. Though the original *Total Wormage* had become a cult hit in Bournemouth, nobody predicted just how popular the final game would be. *Worms* received rave reviews, was converted to ten other platforms (including an aborted *Virtual Boy* port) and accumulated sales in excess of five million units. Having left Team 17 after the release of *Worms Armageddon*, Andy, like an estranged parent, has watched his original concept evolve without his own input. "Obviously the big change has been *Worms 3D*. This was something I'd always argued against. *Worms* was built around being a 2D game and all the game mechanics are designed around that. To just take the game and put it in 3D ends up breaking a lot of those mechanics. I just see it as a bit pointless. I'd rather start again from scratch and build a 3D game with the same qualities as *Worms*, rather than try and recreate *Worms* itself." As for the original Amiga game, Andy is just as proud now as he was 11 years ago. "When you are that close to something, you never know for sure how other people will take to it. Hearing stories of people staying up night after night playing it with their mates at uni was great, because that's what the game had been designed for in the first place. I'm just glad they liked it."



OTHER GAMES IN THE SERIES:
Worms: The Director's Cut, Worms 2, Worms Armageddon, Worms Pinball, Worms World Party, Worms Blast, Worms 3D, Worms Forts: Under Siege, Worms Golf, Worms 4 Mayhem, Worms: Open Warfare

NO I IN TEAM 17

Following the success of *Worms*, the gaming community eagerly awaited Andy's next concept but after a couple of sequels it became apparent that it wasn't to be and he mysteriously left Team 17, never to work in the games industry again. "I wanted to take risks and ensure any sequel offered something significant over it's predecessors. One of the things I'd wanted to try was giving it a proper real-time one-player game. This was supposed to be part of *Worms Armageddon* but we were never given the go-ahead to do a prototype to see how well it would have worked. I'd seen so many games I'd loved in the past devalued by sequels for the sake of sequels, that I didn't want that happening here. However it seemed like this was going to be the direction the series would go in from there. I'd been working on ideas for a completely different game but I wasn't given the go-ahead to develop that further either. So it was at that point that I decided to leave. Walking away from it all was one of the hardest decisions I've had to make but I just wasn't achieving what I wanted there."



» To catch up with Andy Davidson and find out about his latest projects check out www.slightlytwisted.co.uk

CLASSIC GAMING ON A BUDGET

CHEAP AS CHIPS



If there's one thing we've learned about retrogaming, it's that your money can stretch an amazingly long way. Granted a mint copy of *Radiant Silvergun* is going to cost you a small fortune, but there are plenty of worthy titles that can be picked up for less than a fiver. The latest bargain basement classic we look at is the oft-ignored *Sega Marine Fishing*. Now where's that fishing rod…

SEGA MARINE FISHING

- » **SYSTEM:** DREAMCAST
- » **RELEASED:** 2000
- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **DEVELOPER:** WOW ENTERTAINMENT



» There was a handy selection of lures on offer and more could be won in Free Fishing mode

The worst thing about *Sega Bass Fishing* was that catching the same type of fish did get a little boring. Sure, the Bass themselves came in all different shapes and sizes, and there was no denying the appeal of waving the Dreamcast's fishing rod around like a lunatic (although this wasn't perhaps the best way of catching said fish) but we couldn't help but want more.

When Sega finally answered our call it was a bittersweet experience, for while it revealed that a conversion of its new arcade game *Sega Marine Fishing* would be hitting the Dreamcast, the downside was that unlucky Pal owners would be missing out (although it did arrive on the PC a year later).

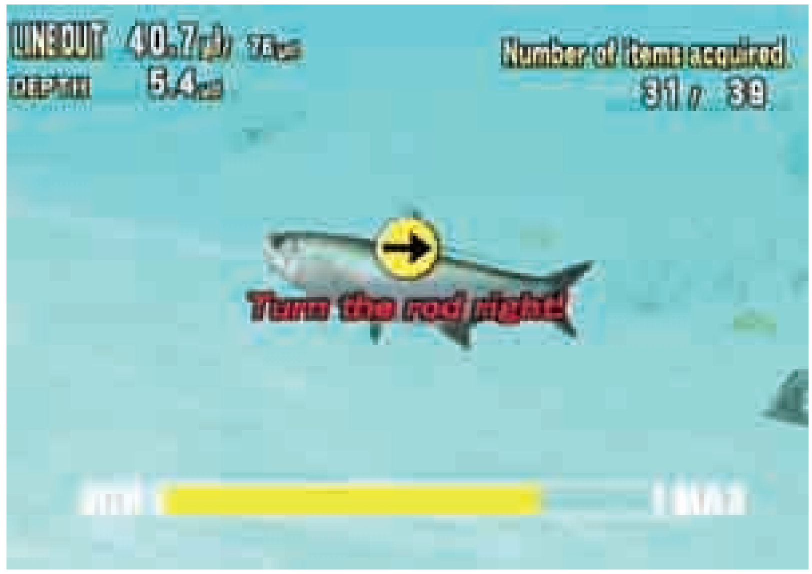
Nowadays Sega's underrated title can be picked up for a scant couple of notes, but at its time of release we forked out around 50 quid for it and the relevant boot disc in order to play it on our Pal machines. Luckily, it was money well spent, as good-old-Sega had included plenty of extras to round off what was already a solid arcade conversion.

The actual arcade mode took place in four suitably exotic locations ranging from shallow stretches of crystal-clear water to the murky depths of the Off Shore – a far cry from the dull looking lakes seen in *Sega Bass Fishing*. Each body of water was literally swimming (ouch) with fish and this time around there was an amazing variety of the little buggers to catch – 18 in fact. Stingrays, Great Barracudas, Tarpons, Dolphin Fish and Yellowfin Tunas were just a few of the fish you could catch, and needless to say, each and every one of them could be a real bitch to land. The sharks in particular could be extremely nasty and would often require intense battles that seemed to last an age, but then, when the fish on the end of your line is pushing 270 pounds it's to be expected.

Although the arcade mode offered a good chance to hone your fishing skills, the 'reel' (ouch again) meat of *Sega Marine Fishing* could be found in its comprehensive Free Fishing Mode. *Sega Marine* featured five involving mini-games: Fight, Fishing, Total Weight, Casting and Lure Action training modes. By excelling in these five sub-games it was possible to unlock a staggering 266 different items for the Free Fishing section. As its name suggests, Free Fishing required you to do little more than to choose your rod, line and lure, deck yourself out in some nifty attire and fish to your heart's desire. Every fish you caught presented you with one of the items you'd unlocked from the five mini-games. While many consisted of new types of equipment to enhance your fishing prowess, the majority were used to decorate a huge (initially empty) aquarium. Once selected it was possible to choose from a variety of routes – you could then take a leisurely tour and gape in wonder at the many secrets of the sea you had unlocked. Add in some soothing music to accompany your trip and it wasn't uncommon to waste many hours on a section of the game that at first seemed completely pointless.

If you wanted a little more action you simply headed back to the arcade game, mini-games or even took part in the online tournaments that Sega had set up.

Perhaps the biggest joy of Sega's game however, was, like many peripheral-based titles before it, it opened up your hobby to the rest of the family, many of whom would never normally touch one of those 'silly things'. When you've seen your 83-year-old granddad reel in a 190lb Hammerhead Shark, you've seen it all.



» Simple directions would point out the easiest way to land your fish. This tarpon could be real trouble to catch











» Best to keep the gauge in the middle of the bar. Too high, or too low and you'll lose your potential prize

eMag

INCREDIBLE INNOVATION » SCARY END OF LEVEL BADDIES » FINDING HIDDEN TREASURE » BEAT THAT GAME

MAGIC MOMENTS

Sometimes you'll play a game and certain parts of it will stay in your mind forever.
Join us as we slip on our rose-tinted spectacles and look back at some of the greatest videogame moments of all time

GUNSTAR HEROES

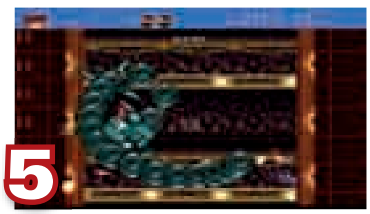
» **SYSTEM:** MEGA DRIVE » **RELEASED:** 1993 » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA » **DEVELOPER:** TREASURE



» So there I was riding my mine cart down a cavern and what did I see?



» Big bullets mean fast damage, you're going to need it



» Not a huge amount of free space here



» The man in the golden gun. See what we done there?

If memory allows us to define the Super Nintendo through its Mode 7 and well crafted gameplay then a synapse somewhere is pushing *Mario* to our conscious self.

If one game encapsulated Sega's machine it was *Gunstar Heroes* and if one level defined *Gunstar Heroes* it was, level two, the mine cart train chase that blew most gamers away.

Having just saved the natives of earth from the evil Empire's army and retrieving the first of the four gems required to restore all that is good in the world, you return to the lab only to be told by the good Doctor that you need to go through the mine to rescue his brother, Professor Green. The good Doctor lends you the use of his futuristic mine cart and signs off with a simple "be aggressive!" – he needn't have wasted his breath.

Enter stage left, one Gunstar Hero with a fixed shot weapon, riding a mine cart hurtling headlong into a level, rails run along the floor, rails run along the roof, soldiers fly in from above, from the left and from the right. Double-jumping moves the cart from floor to roof and back again, it doesn't matter, it is all our hero can do to stave off the armies of attackers, it matters not which way up our Gunstar Hero is.

Then the action breaks from multiple chaos into a more measured slaughter of the oncoming masses, our Gunstar has the upper hand.

And so it was that our hero hardly noticed that travelling at post-*Sonic* velocity he was bound to catch things up, things like a troop carrying train, full of believe it or not, troops. More enemies with bigger weapons create a bigger battleground, and still the cart speeds on and on. Defeated the train's captain starts throwing his troops at our hero, you, in a vain attempt to stem his progress, too late, the train begins to break up and the protagonists head down a shaft. Still on rails the battle rages now with soldiers, trains and lasers straddling the shaft, all the while our hero's cart is speeding up.

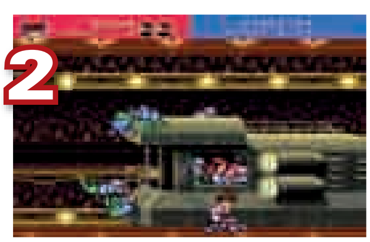
Once at the bottom the more familiar left-to-right battle scenario returns and so it continues until the train and the soldiers are finally defeated.

Then a warning message appears, boss approaching. With more transformations than a shape-shifting convention, it becomes apparent that the battle is far from over, and this is still only level two.

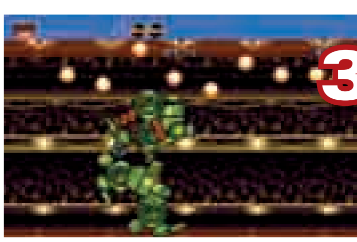
First up comes Soldier Force replete with his arm vortex and boomerang, running at our hero from the left he is easily despatched through simple up and down rail swaps and continuous fire. As the boss morphs into Tails Force our hero is sent back down a shaft, this boss straddles the whole play area, jumping to survive it's a complicated run-and-gun affair to dispatch this foe, timing is everything, especially at this speed.

Then the Gun or blaster force, a gun that hovers above our hero, rotating and firing grenades and golden bullets, running to the left and timing shots well our hero avoids any damage, and the gun disappears morphing finally into Urchin Force. This battle takes place once again in a shaft, traversing much of the play area with his Hyper Sonic Spin our Gunstar can't avoid damage and must out-gun the metal beast, eventually Urchin Force explodes, black runs away and you receive the gem for the good Doctor's machine.

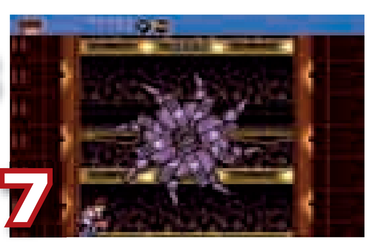
The rest of the game takes you through an airship and a boss-filled board game but while being well presented and innovative throughout *Gunstar Heroes* never recaptures the intensity and speed of level two. But then again no other Mega Drive title came close either.



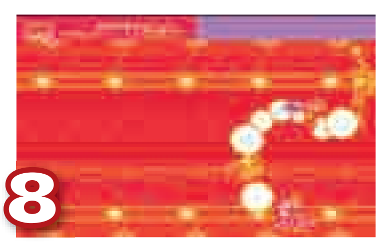
» Talk about leaving it till the last moment to catch your train. British Rail was never this bad…



» The transformation has begun



» Getting closer all the time



» Gotcha!

eMag



Manchester was a city in decline, a shadow of its mighty industrial past. But below the city's bustling streets, dozens of programmers huddled together, working on some of videogaming's most recognisable and playable games. But what became of Ocean, one of Europe's biggest ever game developers? David Crookes investigates.



LIFE ON THE

It was one of the largest and most respected games publishers in the world – a company that produced movie tie-ins by the bucketload and converted dozens of top notch coin-op classics.

Nowadays, Ocean Software is nowhere to be seen, having been swallowed up by French firm Infogrames in the late 1990s.

But during the height of its dominance, the firm was frequently voted "software house of the year", its adverts plastered across almost every single computer magazine across two decades.

"And everyone hated us," says top Spectrum games programmer Jonathan Smith, who was at Ocean for three years from 1984 and was responsible for *Midnight Resistance* and the wrist-numbing *Daley Thompson's Super Test*.

"They were right to hate us. I buzzed off that!"

Ocean was founded by Liverpudlian David Ward, who had already achieved business success with a small chain of boutiques selling ethnic garb, which, in the early 1980s, was quite a trend.

Thinking he could get a good supply of gear from Morocco, fill up a van and bring it back to Britain to flog at a profit, he found himself languishing in a jail in Algerizas. With this in mind, he flew to Morocco for his next trip and did the deals on a more professional level and his clothing plan began to expand. But before long, he had spotted another trend, this time while on a trip to America. He saw potential in the fledgling computer games market and realised videogames would one day be a firm part of the entertainment business.

So, on his return to Britain in 1982, he set up Ocean Software as a publishing company. All he needed to do, he surmised, was find a group of talented programmers to produce a range of great games which he could market. By the end of the first year, Ward had five staff, a turnover of £500,000 and had sold 200,000 games. He became chairman, and his partner Jon Woods – who is now a major investor in Everton Football Club – was managing director. And the Ocean brand was established as the EA of its day, with around 60 programmers around Britain. Ward said in 1986: "As a publisher we wanted to cast our net as wide as possible so as not to exclude any creative forces."

After a couple of years, Ocean became a developer and snapped up young, emerging talent to work in-house. With an average age of 19, the programmers were loyal and keen. Ocean became based on Central Street in Manchester and there were certainly temptations outside the office, a stone's throw from the nightlife and shops of Deansgate. But the programmers hardly saw daylight – they were holed up in the building's basement and, to make matters worse, there was an alcohol ban, possibly because it was a former Quakers building. And a supposedly haunted one at that.

Artist Brian Flanaghan says: "The building was on a burial ground and there is still a plaque on the Central Street car park explaining the history - and the fact that there are still scores of remains buried there. "And where were we? In the basement! Some people mentioned feelings of 'not being alone' during all nighters, but I can't say I saw or felt anything supernatural..."

IN BRIEF

Ocean was the Electronic Arts of the Eighties, a big, brash, software house obsessed by film and arcade licenses. Set up by Liverpudlian entrepreneur David Ward in Manchester in 1982, it was first a publisher, then a developer. Ocean initially produced a string of terrible games but managed to sell them, generating enough cash to go on to create bigger and better games. Ambitious plans in 1996 to reorganise Ocean in light of the new consoles were scrapped when Infogrames bought the company. Three years later, the brand was no more.









DEVELOPER LOOKBACK

OCEAN WAVES

But why Manchester? "I can't remember why Ocean set up offices in Manchester" says Gary Bracey, former development director at Ocean who started at the firm in 1985. "Both Jon and David were from Liverpool but I think they believed Manchester had a more credible commercial perception than Liverpool, due to the left wing image it portrayed at the time. Image was certainly important. David and Jon were marketing people first and foremost and built the company on their creativity and drive to succeed. But while it may have been outwardly perceived as a well-oiled, professional organisation, inside, Ocean was a ball of sheer energy, running on the power of the developers' talents and the managers' enthusiasm and beliefs."

The in-house talent at Ocean began to grow substantially, but Ocean was also proud of its external resources, which included Jon Ritman and Bernie Drummond, Denton Designs, Sensible Software and Digital Image Design which produced some of the finest flight sims the market had seen. But those early days of games development at Ocean were a real seat-of-the-pants affair, according to Bracey.

He said the games gestated at the whims of the programmers and artists' creative freedoms were encouraged, but indulgences had to be reined in due to that ever-present threat of slippage.

Yet many of those early games were hardly ground-breaking, even though they carried big names from *Knight Rider* through *Street Hawk*, to *Transformers*.

That's because Ward believed the key to good game sales was to make it recognisable to consumers. This led to scores of film and arcade licences being secured – many of which were absolutely dire. "If you forget that *Knight Rider/Street Hawk* period then Ocean will always be remembered with fondness," laughs Mark Jones (a graphic designer who spent two years at Ocean) recalling the terrible state of those two games.

Jones, starting at Ocean in January 1987, worked on some of the developers more classic games from *Total Recall*, *Gryzor* and *Wizball* to *Arkanoid*, *Vindicator* and *Rambo III*. By this time, Ocean was establishing its brand and sales were buoyant. Ocean, with a £10 million turnover, was employing 62 staff and had sold three million games for a range of computer formats. It had also snapped up Imagine Software – one of the high-profile casualties of a downturn in sales in the mid-Eighties. Imagine, based in Liverpool, had a reputation for producing excellent games for the 8-bit machines with *Renegade* and *Yie Ar Kung Fu* just two of the classics.

But in that pursuit of excellence, financial control had gone by the wayside, so Imagine – and its international reputation – was cemented with the Ocean brand and became devoted to arcade games, in particular conversions from Konami coin-op titles such as the aforementioned *Yie Ar Kung Fu* and *Hypersports*.

This meant Ocean was bigger than ever, in both financial and influential terms. Not only was it able to tap into the vast talent at Imagine, its own programmers were starting to knock out some outstanding titles and they were beginning to really enjoy themselves. Jones certainly recalls being impressed by the firm when he went for



» Bill Harbison had a problem drawing the Batmobile. So kapow…he bought the toy!

» Ocean saw the value of its back catalogue and would bundle some of its classic titles together into a compilation.

OCEAN'S FREELOAD

Nobody liked loading games from tape and all were grateful to Paul Hughes for creating Ocean's Freeload which quickened the process and provided protection against piracy. The first Ocean game to use Freeload was *Wizball* on the Commodore 64 in 1987. It replaced a previous tape loader, displaying a picture and, on the C64, playing music as the game loaded.

The loader came complete with an excellent tune, created by Martin Galway, Peter Clarke or Johnathan Dunn. "They were all prolific musicians," Hughes says. "You just asked for a new piece for the loader and they'd oblige."

When Ocean released its budget label, Hit Squad, the games were duplicated by Ablex in Birmingham. A cheap duplication machine was used which couldn't duplicate Freeload at high speed and Hughes had to slow the loader down, which led to Jon Dunn having to write new loading music. "His original tune was too short and ran out before the load finished," Hughes laughs.



an interview in December 1986. "My interview, which I attended with my mum because I'd never been on a train on my own let alone gone to a different town, was relaxed," he says. "Gary Bracey was very friendly. The general feel of the place was that we all wanted to do our best and produce games that were as good as we could make them."

Ocean rewarded this work by crediting the programmers, artists and musicians on the games themselves and this helped to motivate the staff.

Jones says: "These games were going out with our names on them as well as the Ocean or Imagine name. You wanted them to be good. If not just for the good of the company but for selfish reasons too. If it had 'Mark R. Jones' on it, I didn't want anything to look rubbish."

While the programmers toiled at their keyboards, Bracey and games producer Lorraine Broxton wandered around, taking an active interest in what was going on, what was new and what had been changed.

Other games programmers also took regular screen breaks to see what others were doing.

Jones says: "You couldn't just sit there at your computer screen from 9.30am till 5pm. Sometimes it would get to the stage where you'd been looking at a game for so long, you couldn't tell if it was any good or not. It meant everyone was aware of what everyone else was doing – if you'd produced something bad, there would be no beating about the bush."

Jones' first project was *Wizball*. He had never produced an animated sprite before so gained help from Simon Butler and Ronnie Fowles, who'd just finished the graphics for *Short Circuit* and were in the late stages of *Arkanoid*, both for the Spectrum.

"They explained to me how to use the in-house Ocean animation program. This was an amended version of Melbourne Draw with animation capabilities," Jones says. But he is still not happy with the result, despite the game achieving both a Crash Smash and Sinclair User Classic.

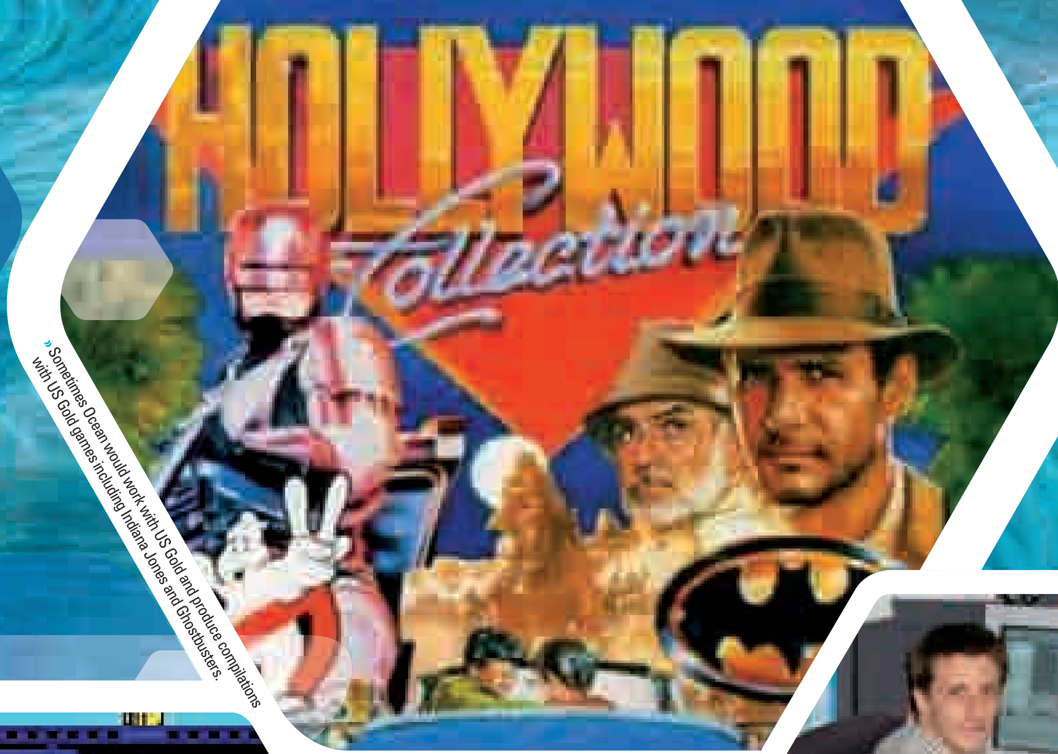
He says: "The programmer of *Wizball* was also new and lots of stuff I'd created was left out. All I see when I look at it is what it could have been. The programmer left the project a month before it was due to be completed and it had to be handed to Paul Owens to finish."

Although Ocean developed many original titles, film licences were king. Videogaming was still in its infancy, although movie merchandising had been prevalent ever since *Star Wars* became a multi-million spin-off industry in 1977. But until Ocean appeared, making the game-of-the-film was still relatively unheard of. Some companies had tried it and been bitten - Atari spent $22 million on *ET: The Extra Terrestrial* only to end up with a terrible game and extremely low sales. Ocean was determined to do it right.

Bracey said: "At first, you could get the licences themselves relatively inexpensively as the movie companies hadn't yet realised the potential income that could be generated so we snapped them up. Eventually, we were building such a strong track record in terms of sales for licensed games, that I started to get flooded with scripts from movie companies actually wanting us to license their titles. That meant key titles like *Batman* weren't that hard to acquire."

One of Ocean's best movie licenses was *Robocop* – Bracey's favourite. "The box-office was pretty good for this low budget movie, and we produced a first-rate game based on it. We then went on to sub-licence and produce the game on all other formats including the new NES console system and an actual coin-op machine. The game sold millions of units in all of its entities and it was probably one of the most lucrative titles Ocean ever had – I seem to recall that the licence was not terribly expensive."

But there were some mistakes. Artist Brian Flanaghan says: "We went after some crazy stuff, like *Michael Jackson's Thriller* for the NES and there was mention of a U2 bid – neither came to fruition. "There was also *Radio Flyer*, a licence apparently based around a popular American child's 'pull kart' thing. After reading the script, it turned out the film was about child abuse! Great gaming material there.



» Sometimes Ocean would work with US Gold and produce compilations with US Gold games including Indiana Jones and Ghostbusters.







» **Left to right:** Top man; Gary Bracey was software director from 1985 to 1995. Brian Flanagan: Co-founder; David Ward created Ocean and raked in the cash. He is now boss at iFone, which makes games for mobile phones. Graphic genius; Artist ,Simon Butler, worked on loads of Ocean games including *NOMAD, Miami Vice, Total Recall, Navy Seals* and *Addams Family*

Obviously the game was axed before anything was programmed."
But of all the games which stick in the mind, Bracey says his biggest error was *Hudson Hawk*. "That was easily the worst license I acquired," he says cringing at the memory. "The film turned out to be a dreadful, self-indulgent pile of crap and the game was no better. The problem was that the script was one of the best I had ever read. Unfortunately, what ended up on the screen was a far cry from the script I had been given. Thanks Mr Willis!"

Yet Ocean came in for widespread criticism for its film licences, with many branding them formulaic platformers. The company always contested that it was what people wanted and the games certainly continued to top the charts – Bracey notes confidentially that during his nine years at the company, Ocean generated more than 100 chart number ones.

Although Bracey has admitted the majority of games weren't anything special, he puts that down to the sheer quantity of titles Ocean produced, yet firmly believes there were many gems which hit the mark – not least *Batman*, which had many sub-games, *Robocop 3*, enhanced by its driving and shoot-'em-up sections, *Addams Family*, a massive platform game, and *Hook*, a true adventure game. And he points to the solid hits *F-29*, *Battle Command*, *Push Over*, *Sleep Walker* and *Wizkid*, as notable, original 16-bit games.

Nevertheless, film licences were the most important and the need to get them out at around the same time as the movie put a lot of pressure on Ocean's staff, who were often given very strict deadlines.

This would mean some heavy stints for the programmers and it was not unknown for some of them to work a shift far in excess of 24 hours to get the game finished and down to the duplicators.

Any laughter that would usually emanate from down below in the basement would quieten during these tense periods of time. Programmer Paul Hughes said: "The in-house crew had some absolutely incredible talent that didn't blink at the thought of working 72 hours straight and then driving to the duplicators with the master."

But despite their hard work, the programmers were always last to find out about the new movie tie-ups and so would engage in a little skulduggery. Jones says: "The first we would hear about the latest deals was when film companies would send scripts, photo stills and promotional material.

"It would always do us good to have a discrete nose round Gary Bracey's desk when he wasn't there – I can say that now, I'm sure he knows – everyone did it!"

Arcade licences were equally important to Ocean. Between 1983 and 1992, half of all the games Ocean released were based on coin-ops or films. And they threw up their own problems, mainly for the programming staff. Ocean's bosses would approach their programmers with the latest state-of-the-art, all-singing, all-dancing arcade machine – telling them their next project was to convert it to the humble Spectrum, C64 or Amstrad.

As Simon Butler recalls, "It was a challenge, but also a major pain."

Many of Butler's games were coin-op conversions or film licenses. He worked on titles spanning almost all of Ocean's lifespan from *The Never-Ending Story*, *Platoon*, and *Combat School*, to *Total Recall*, *Darkman*, and the *Addams Family* and all had to be faithful to the film or arcade, a difficult task.

It was a challenge also faced by graphic designer Bill Harbison, who joined Ocean in March 1988.

"I was proud of my coin-op conversion of *Chase HQ*," he says. "We had the arcade machine of *Chase HQ* so I could copy the graphics, although we didn't have the technology to strip the graphics from the arcade board so I had to play the game with one hand and have a pencil in the other to make reference sketches. *Batman* was easier, the only difficulty being I had very little reference material to draw the Batmobile convincingly in 3D and couldn't get it right – even with a week to go to completion. Luckily some *Batman* toys were available. I bought myself a small Batmobile and used it to draw the finished sprites."

OCEAN AND AMSTRAD

When Amstrad decided to produce its ill-fated GX4000 console, it knew it needed some big names to back it up. And at the time – 1990 – Ocean was the top software house and the two companies soon came to a deal, along with Gremlin, Titus, Loricel, and Domark.

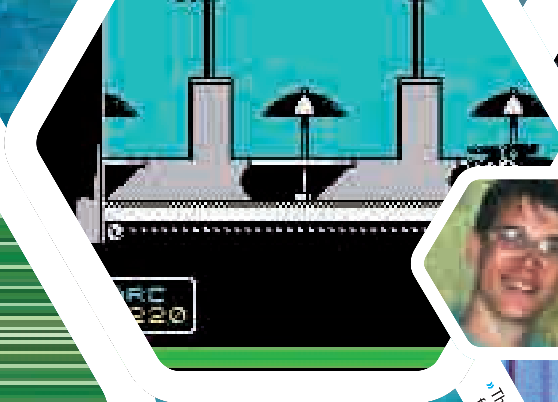
Amstrad gave the companies free reign to create any game they wanted, the only stipulation was that the packaging had to follow a pre-set format. Ocean then knocked out a series of games although, sadly, many were straight ports of existing CPC titles, only sold at vastly inflated prices.

But then, money was the important thing. Sir Alan Sugar said as much at the launch. "We don't just see this as Amstrad fighting Nintendo and Sega," he said, talking about the battle for console dominance. "We see this as Amstrad, together with companies such as Ocean and others who want to make some money and who do not want to be dictated to, fighting against these people."

Ocean's *Burnin Rubber* game was created specially for the GX4000 and was bundled with the machine.

Ocean also created games for another 8-bit inspired console, the Commodore 64GS. Unfortunately, that too ultimately failed.

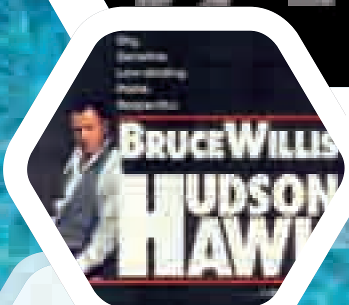




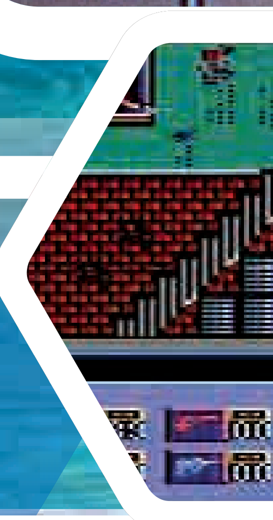


» The C64's Daley Thompson's Olympic Challenge gets a familiar face - Ocean graphic designer Mark Jones





» *Hudson Hawk;* Great film, believable characters, interesting plot, worth watching, good game potential… Gary Bracey thought so – and later regretted it



"OF ALL THE GAME WHICH STICK IN THE MIND, BRACEY SAYS HIS BIGGEST ERROR WAS HUDSON HAWK. 'THAT WAS EASILY THE WORST LICENCE I ACQUIRED, THE FILM WAS A PILE OF CRAP'"

MAGAZINES

"Everyone hated us," says Jonathan Smith - but was that the case? Certainly, the top computer magazines of the 1980s and early 1990s thrived off Ocean – if only because of its advertising.

Gary Bracey says: "Obviously, we spent a small fortune advertising in magazines and so they were wary of upsetting us too much. But in general, if one of our games sucked then they said so and were equally enthusiastic if the title warranted it."

Mark Jones agreed: "From my experience the magazines loved Ocean. They were always nice and friendly when they came round. Every now and again you'd get a mag come in and do the rounds, having a look at what was in development. They'd sit down and you'd talk them through what you were doing, what stage the game was at and what was to be done. Ocean were always given good write-ups when the magazines were previewing games. We'd do what we could for the magazines, providing screenshots and sometimes demos for them to take away."

There were some problems, however. Bracey says: "There were one or two journalists who just hated Ocean and we knew that they would always give us a poor score no matter what the game genuinely deserved."

While developing a game, staff would wear many hats including those of storyboard artist, producer, character designer, game designer, and copywriter. Butler says: "We got involved in many parts of the game and we cared for them. It rankled when we were pipped to the number one slot in the charts or when we missed out on a plum licence or franchise."

Much of that was because Ocean's greatest rival, US Gold, was breathing down their necks, even though Ward and Woods had a large stake in the company. From time to time, the two companies worked together, particularly on compilations, bringing together the best of both firms in treats such as *They Sold A Million* including Ocean's *Daley Thompson's Decathalon* and US Gold's *Beach Head*. But in every other respect, the pair were at war. When they became concerned there were budget houses flogging software for £1.99 as opposed to full price, they each set up rival low-price labels, US Gold forming Kixx and Ocean creating The Hit Squad, to sell old games first at £2.99, later at £3.99.

Bracey said: "There really was serious rivalry between Ocean and US Gold. We wanted to be the best and wouldn't rest on our laurels. But as time passed and we entered the console era then I think our main competitors became companies like Acclaim – though the competition and desire to be the best remained."

Competition extended inwards too. Butler says: "There was a sense of camaraderie at Ocean but also a healthy sense of competition between the various teams; to top the animation, to better the graphics or, in the coder's field, to have more sprites, bigger sprites - for your code to be better or faster."

"But it got harder with the 16-bits," adds Jones. "Instead of a few hours putting pixels in the right place to make a character die convincingly on the 8-bits, you spent double the time making sure the shading was correct or light was coming in from the same place."

As time went by, Ocean adapted to the changing market conditions. Games switched from being programmed by a few to being tackled by masses. And the threat of the big American and Japanese companies was brushed aside, with Bracey saying Ocean was excited and not scared by the challenge.

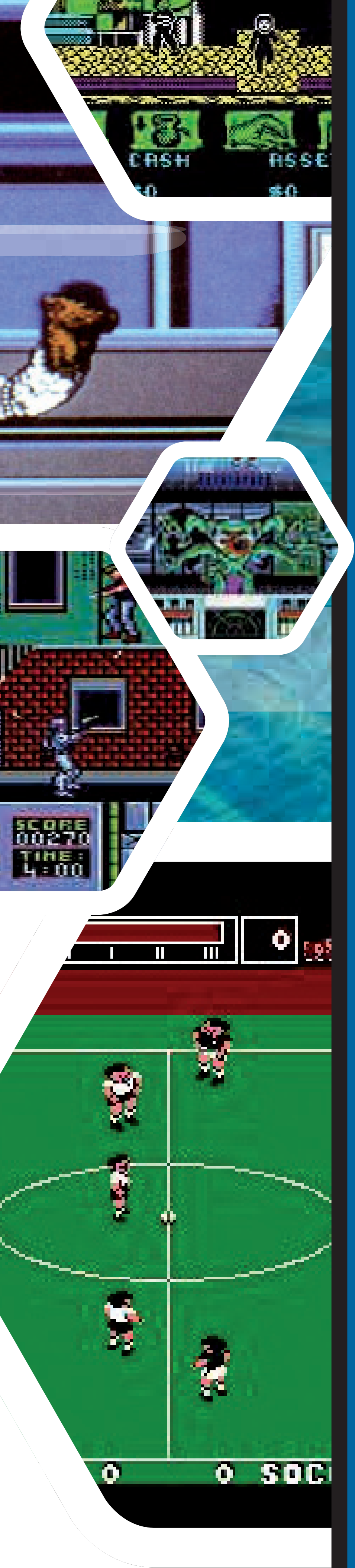
Ocean had spent a couple of years in the early Nineties worrying about how the industry was going to develop. But around 1994, it set up a new in-house development team, Tribe, and head of software development Ian Turnbull decided a professional, structured way of working was needed if Ocean was to make the massive jump from 8/16-bit to 32/64-bit.

Separate teams were created, each having a team leader, lead programmer and designer. Games were developed off-screen six months before any coding began and by 1996 there were 80 Tribe staff members. But in that same year, French firm Infogrames came sniffing and snapped up Ocean. It retained the Manchester office for development until Infogrames bought Gremlin in 1999 and programming was moved to Sheffield. Not long after, the Ocean brand was dropped. *GT 64 Championship Edition* for the Nintendo 64 was the last game by Ocean in 1998.

Flanagan said: "The initial feeling when Infogrames took over was good. We had a new shiny building, and this strange French megacorp was going to put lots of money into the company. But then certain games weren't released. I was working on *The Shadow* for the SNES and Mega Drive and had designed the sprites and a large proportion of the backgrounds. I also designed the game and was the lead artist but, sadly, the game was never released as the filmed bombed massively."

Many of the old Ocean guys – and gals – have not gone away completely, however. As well as most being involved in the industry in some way, they also chat on the forums at – www.theoceanexperience.co.uk.

Jones added: "It's sad in a way that the Ocean name has gone but good in another. I guess it means it will always remind misty eyed 30-something gamers of a time when games didn't have to rely on fancy FMVs and flashy graphics in order to impress."



SOFTOGRAPHY

1983
Royal Birkdale: Championship Golf (Spectrum)
Digger Dan (Spectrum)
Island Of Death (Oric)
Armageddon (Spectrum)
Rescue (Spectrum)
Pogo (Spectrum)
Android 2 (Spectrum, C64)
Rollerball (C64)

1984
Gift From the Gods (Spectrum)
Gilligan's Gold (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Robotics (Spectrum)
Eskimo Eddie (Spectrum, C64)
Hunchback (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Bruce Lee (Spectrum)
Mr. Wimpy (Spectrum, C64)
High Noon (Spectrum, C64)
Cavelon (Spectrum, C64)
Moon Alert (Spectrum)
Daley Thompson's Decathlon (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Chinese Juggler, The (Spectrum, C64)
Kong (Spectrum, C64)
Transversion (Spectrum)
Bangers and Mash (C64)
Spellbound (C64)

1985
Hunchback 2: Quasimodo's Revenge (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Kong 2: Kong Strikes Back (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Match Day (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Neverending Story, The (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Daley Thompson's Supertest (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Pud Pud in Weird World (Spectrum)
Rambo (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Frankie Goes to Hollywood (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Tornado Low Level (Spectrum, C64)
Roland's Rat Race (Spectrum, C64)
A Fi$tful of Buck$ (C64)
Cosmic Wartoad (Spectrum)
V (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)

1986
Platoon (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST)
Street Hawk (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
N.O.M.A.D. (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Nightmare Rally (Spectrum)
Donkey Kong (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Superbowl (Spectrum)
Great Escape, The (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Gryzor (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Nexus (Spectrum)
Miami Vice (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Helikopter Jagd (C64)
Highlander (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Transformers (Spectrum, C64)
Hunchback II (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Hunchback – The Adventure (Spectrum, C64)
Cobra (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Mailstrom (Spectrum)
Laser Sprite Generator (Spectrum)
It's A Knockout (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Knight Rider (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Batman (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Army Moves (Spectrum)
Parallax (Spectrum, C64)

1987
Wizball (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST)
Short Circuit (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
International Match Day (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Mario Bros (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Starace (C64)
Match Day 2 (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Slap Fight (Spectrum)
Flashpoint (Spectrum)
Top Gun (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Double Take (Spectrum, C64)
Mutants (Spectrum, C64)
Tank (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Tai-Pan (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Head Over Heels (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST)
Road Race (Spectrum)
Super Bowl XX (Spectrum, C64)
Combat School (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Eco (Amiga, Atari ST)

1988
Gutz (Spectrum, C64)
Typhoon (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Cabal (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST)
Emilio Butraguemo 1 (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Operation Wolf (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amstrad GX4000, Amiga, Atari ST)
Rambo 3 (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST)
Phantom Club (Spectrum, Amstrad)
Firefly (Spectrum, C64)
W.E.C. Le Mans (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Batman – The Caped Crusader (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST)
Psycho Soldier (Spectrum)
Track & Field (Spectrum)
Daley Thompson's Olympic Challenge (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Madballs (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad)
Moonshadow (C64)
Where Time Stood Still (Spectrum)

1989
Red Heat (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST)
Chase HQ (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST)
Operation Thunderbolt (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST)
Robocop (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST, GameBoy)
Run the Gauntlet (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST)
Beach Volley (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST)
Batman – The Movie (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST, PC)
New Zealand Story, The (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST)
Untouchables, The (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST, NES, MSX)
Emilio Butraguemo 2 (Spectrum)
F29 - Retaliator (Amiga, Atari ST, PC)
Voyager (Amiga)

1990
Shadow Warriors (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST)
Robocop 2 (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad GX4000, Amiga, Atari ST, GameBoy)
Rainbow Islands: Bubble Bobble 2 (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST, GameBoy)
Midnight Resistance (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST)
Puzznic (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST)
Sly Spy: Secret Agent (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST)
Chase HQ 2: Special Criminal Investigations (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad GX4000, Amiga, Atari ST)
Narc (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST)
Plotting (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST)
Pang (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad GX4000, Amiga, Atari ST)
Night Breed (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST)
Adidas Championship Football (Spectrum, C64)
Adidas Championship Tie-Break (Spectrum)
Lost Patrol (Amiga, Atari ST, PC)
Ivanhoe (Amiga)
Shadow Of The Beast (C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST)
Burnin Rubber (GX4000)

1991
Toki (Spectrum, C64, Amiga, Atari ST)
Navy Seals (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST, GameBoy)
Double Dragon (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST)
Total Recall (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST)
Battle Command (Spectrum, C64, Amiga, Atari ST)
Smash TV (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST)
Simpsons: Bart Vs The Space Mutants (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST)
Hudson Hawk (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST)
Darkman (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST, NES, Game Boy)
Terminator 2: Judgement Day (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST)
WWF WrestleMania (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST)
Addams Family, The (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST, SNES, Game Boy)
Elf (Amiga, Atari ST, PC)

1992
WWF European Rampage Tour (C64, Amiga, Atari ST)
Cool World (C64, Amiga, Atari ST, NES, Game Boy)
Robocop 3 (Spectrum, C64, Amiga, Atari ST, NES)
Spacegun (Spectrum, C64, Amiga, Atari ST)
Epic (Amiga, Atari ST, PC)
Hook (C64, Amiga, Atari ST, SNES, NES, Mega Drive, Game Boy, Game Gear)
Lethal Weapon (Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST, SNES, NES, Game Boy)
Parasol Stars: Rainbow Islands II (Amiga, Atari ST, PC, Game Boy)
Pushover (Amiga, Atari ST, PC, SNES)
Sleepwalker (C64, Amiga, Atari ST)
Wizkid (Amiga, Atari ST)

1993
Dennis The Menace (Amiga, Amiga CD32, SNES, Game Boy)
Jurassic Park (Amiga, NES, Mega Drive, Sega Master System, Game Boy, Game Gear)
Ryder Cup Golf (Amiga)
Shut-It (PC)
Retee 2 (Amiga)

1994
Inferno (PC)
Eek The Cat (SNES)
Jungle Strike (Amiga, Amiga CD32)
Kid Chaos (Amiga)

1995
The Raiden Project
Mr Nutz (Amiga, Sega Mega Drive, SNES, Game Boy)

1996
Break Point (PlayStation)
Cheesy (PlayStation)
Tunnel B1 (PlayStation, Sega Saturn)
World Rally Fever (PC)
X2 (PlayStation)
Zero Divide (PlayStation)

1997
(I-War) (PC)
Jersey Device (PlayStation)
Total Drivin (PlayStation)
Multi-Racing Championship (N64)

1998
Fighters Destiny (N64)
Mission: Impossible (N64)
Wetrix (N64, PC)
Viper (PlayStation)
Zero Divide 2 (PlayStation)
GT 64 Championship Edition (N64)

Timeline

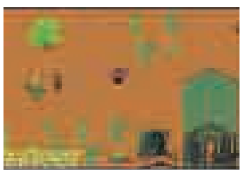
With literally hundreds of games to their name, finding an Ocean game is easy. But there were some notable ones – for reasons both good and bad.



THE NEVER-ENDING STORY [1985]

Systems, Spectrum, Commodore, Amstrad

This early solid, three-part text adventure was based on the popular film and book and featured great graphics from Simon Butler. But looking back, it had quite limiting gameplay and suffers from a lack of character interaction. Objects cannot be examined and the parser is limited making your role as Atreyu and your task of saving the land of Fantasia from the Nothing that is destroying it, quite hard work.



RAMBO [1985]

Spectrum, C64, Amstrad

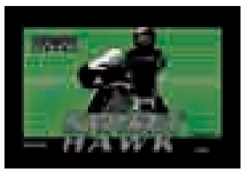
Rambo cashed in on the infamous Sylvester Stallone movie but lacked the nationalism and gore which made it controversial. Poor graphics and a muggy control system caused it to be an over-hyped mess and nothing more than a sub-standard, relentless blast-'em-up using knives, bow and arrows, machine guns, grenades and rocket launchers. The enemies fired at you no matter your position so you had to keep moving – flicking the off switch was more satisfying.



KNIGHT RIDER [1986]

Spectrum, C64, Amstrad

The Eighties television series was good – this game was one of the worst ever made. Fans had waited for more than a year to play the pixellated forms of Michael Knight and his amazing talking car KITT and to say they were disappointed was an understatement. Driving the car should have been a joy – instead it was dull and hard to control, no matter whether you decided to handle the car yourself or let the computer take over to leave you to shoot enemy helicopters. A terrible mistake.



STREET HAWK [1986]

Spectrum, C64, Amstrad

Another TV licence and another lengthy wait for fans to see this title on the shelf led to further pulling of hair in sheer frustration at the utterly dire game which resulted. The top-down view on a downward rolling road was impressively flicker free but it was marred by poor controls and turgid gameplay that was not even lit up by the imaginative methods employed by the baddies, such as emerging from manholes.



GRYZOR [1986]

Spectrum, C64, Amstrad

Mark Jones' graphics shone bright from this 8-bit game, from the beautiful loading screen to the in-game scenes. And what a game it was. Jones and programmer John Brandwood had been behind the ravishing Renegade and here they were again with a very enjoyable challenge; a shoot-'em-up with strategy as you varied the angle of your shooting in what proved to be a faithful and fun arcade conversion.



HEAD OVER HEELS

[1987] **Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST**

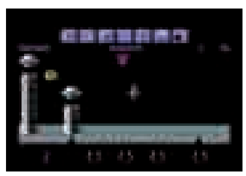
John Ritman and Bernie Drummond – fresh from producing the dazzling 3D action adventure *Batman* – created this classic game that became a jewel in Ocean's crown. Perhaps ironically so, since it had Head and Heels trying to steal crowns from the five worlds of the Blacktooth Empire.



TAI-PAN [1987]

Spectrum, C64, Amstrad

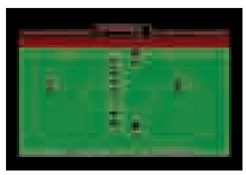
Similar to an *Elite* of the high seas, this game fell far short of that classic. A trading game set on the China seas in the 1840s, this was based on James Clavell's book of the same name. Terrible graphics turned many people off, but there were some nice touches as you got a loan, grabbed a crew and began trading. Yet gameplay was spoiled by the disastrous amount of time it took to load the town and sailing sections during play.



WIZBALL [1987]

Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST

A classic, amazing game! *Wizball* caught the imagination and left goose pimples all over. You just wanted to help Wizball restore some colour to Wizworld after the wizard Zark had left it grey because you were drawn into this original concept, flick-screen, tube and crater extravaganza.



MATCH DAY II [1987]

Spectrum, C64, Amstrad

Ritman and Drummond teamed up again on this follow up to the brilliant *Match Day* and kept all that was good about that first game and added the revolutionary "kickometer" for you to judge how hard you kicked the ball. These was an overhaul of the graphics but the great arcade action set this apart.



TARGET RENEGADE

[1988]

Spectrum, C64, Amstrad

A game from Ocean's respected purchase, Imagine Software, *Target Renegade* was almost identical to *Renegade* with its seedy streets and run-down urban settings but considering the original was superb, it's no surprise that it was used for inspiration.



OPERATION WOLF [1988]

Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST

As arcade conversions go, this was a belter, a real leave-your-brains-in-the-school-cupboard game that your teachers would have poured scorn upon. Its aim was simple; five hostages are trapped in a jungle concentration camp – you must rescue them.



BATMAN: THE CAPED CRUSADER [1988]

Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST

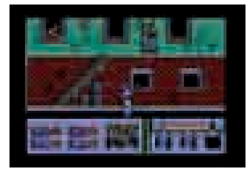
With a movie a year away, Ocean was ahead of itself with this DC Comic tie-in featuring both The Joker and the Penguin. Pages of strict rules and regulations were agreed and the game went back and forth between DC and Ocean. In the end, it was a corker.



CABAL [1988]

Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST

Programmed by James Bagley, this shooter was lacking visually and there was trouble with the crosshairs and the movement of soldiers, both being far from fluid. Yet despite that, Cabal was a solid attempt to replicate the 3D perspective of the original.



ROBOCOP [1989]

Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST, Game Boy

Ocean achieved great success with this one, having picked up the licence relatively cheap and then porting to almost every format imaginable. Even the Amstrad GX4000 got an admittedly lush-looking version. Standard Ocean platform fare it may have been, but as you took to the streets and raided a drugs factory there was enough to keep you interested. "Serve the public trust, protect the innocent, uphold the law." Indeed. And the music was from that Ariston advert.



THE NEW ZEALAND STORY [1989]

Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST

A *Taito* coin-op conversion done with some justice on the 8-bits but falling short of expectations. Fluffy cuteness abounds in this tale about an evil walrus stealing some kiwis. You play the kiwi the walrus missed, complete with a bow and arrow and bent on revenge. Quite nasty for such an airy looking game that was faithful to the arcade game but wasn't all that fun to play.

1985-6 | 1987 | 1988 | 1989

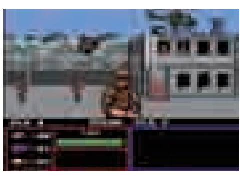
1989



BATMAN: THE MOVIE [1989]

ZX Spectrum, Commodore 64, Amstrad, Commodore Amiga, Atari ST, PC

This was the third *Batman* game to be released by Ocean, this time based on the movie. Split into five levels, it had something to please everyone, from the standard platform levels, through puzzle levels, to finally climbing atop Gotham City Cathedral to dispatch the Joker.



OPERATION THUNDERBOLT [1989]

Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amstrad GX4000, Amiga, Atari ST

The Commodore 64 version of this *Operation Wolf* sequel was a mess. Created by a junior coder, the game was only around half complete when it was handed to Paul Hughes, Johhny Meegan and Rick Palmer. They were given the task to rewrite it from scratch in just 12 days!

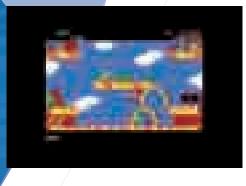


CHASE HQ [1989]

Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST

"Let's go, Mr Driver" – those words have gone down in videogaming lore and Ocean did a great job in converting this coin-op to the home micros, perfectly replicating the ultra-fast sports cars in which you pursued some pretty nifty criminals. Addictive, good looking and a well-chosen and implemented conversion.

1990



RAINBOW ISLANDS [1990]

Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST

There was a problem with *Rainbow Islands* on some formats – how do you replicate colourful rainbows on a Spectrum? But that aside, Ocean did well in translating Bub and Bob's exploring antics across seven islands, using rainbows to kill monsters and also to climb on. Magazines raved over this one, marvelling over the cute graphics and neat gameplay and it was a feather in the Mancunian outfit's cap.



MIDNIGHT RESISTANCE [1990]

Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST

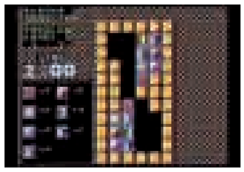
Although slow, this game was a typical Ocean platform-shooter, but was nevertheless very playable. Programmer Jonathan Smith pulled the sprite graphics from the arcade ROMs and said it was easy to convert them to home machines. The result was the player guiding a large sprite of a hero through side-scrolling screens and shooting at anything in sight, using weapons which could spit lead through 360 degrees.



NIGHTBREED [1990]

Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST

In this game of the book and film by Clive Barker, you were thrown into the world of Midian where grotesque monsters roamed and where you, as Aaron Boone, wreaked vengeance on the psychiatrist who had used hypnosis to make you believe you were a murderer. Disappointedly, given a meaty story, this was just a collect-'em-up with a bit of violence. Worse, it was very samey and easy to complete.



PUZZNIC [1990]

Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST

With Ocean's myriad platform shooters, it was refreshing to see *Puzznic* among its catalogue. Quite simply, this was a game to think about, teasing your brain over dozens of levels and proving to be a real challenge. You basically matched tiles with the same pattern and watched them disappear but it wasn't as easy as it sounds and it remains one of the best – if not well known – puzzlers to have graced a computer.

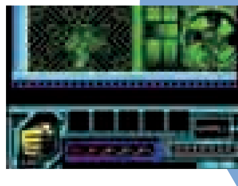


PANG [1990]

Spectrum, C64, Amstrad GX4000, Amiga, Atari ST

Following *Puzznic*, gamers who like to think a little as they play were treated yet again and this arcade conversion couldn't really be bettered. It was easy to pick up and the graphics were superb; a thumping soundtrack added to the excitement. The puzzle and action element of the game, coupled with lots of locations and a perfect difficulty curve made it an essential purchase. Bursting balloons took on a whole new level of excitement.

1991



TOTAL RECALL [1991]

Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST

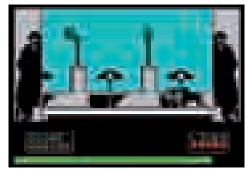
Drawing on the popular Arnold Schwarzenegger film, this game ended up being released to coincide with the video, but was worth the wait. Yes, it followed a rather tired formula – another foray into running, fighting and jumping, another driving section, a boss to bash – but it was polished and exciting enough to make it one of the best licences ever and had lush sprites and brilliant backgrounds.



SMASH TV [1991]

Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST

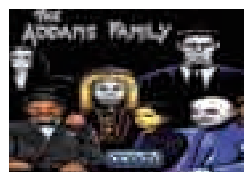
Smash TV was a conversion of the Williams coin-op which was, in turn, an updated version of the arcade hit *Robotron 2084*. The coin-op had four joysticks and action so speedy a tranquilliser was needed before you started to play. Yet although the home versions didn't have an array of joysticks, the speed did, thankfully, remain. The colourful graphics drew you in and the exhilarating gameplay kept you hooked.



HUDSON HAWK [1991]

Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST

Gary Bracey called it the worst license he had ever acquired and said the platform game based upon it was no better than Bruce Willis' dire movie. Yet it achieved a Crash Smash and Amstrad Action gave it 94 per cent. At last – a game better than the movie! It looked smart, had depth and was actually a lot of fun and the short sub-levels added variety. There was even a ventilation shaft bit!



THE ADDAMS FAMILY [1991]

Spectrum, Commodore64, Amstrad, Amiga, Atari ST, SNES, Game Boy

Amiga Power adored this game, created by James Higgins, Warran Lancashire and Simon Butler – and many at Ocean believed it was the best thing they had ever created. It was certainly a fast and furious, *Sonic*-style platformer that shone on the SNES and worked well on the Amiga. But it also translated well on to the 8-bits and achieved deserved rave reviews.

1992-4



SPACE GUN [1992]

Spectrum, C64, Amiga, Atari ST

This *Taito* coin-op conversion was created by Images Software and was similar to *Operation Thunderbolt*, only set in space. But by the time this was released, straight arcades conversions were becoming less of an Ocean hallmark and didn't show the innovation that other products at the time were. The two-player violence fest was enjoyable, however, and there were enough alien nasties to blow away to make it a decent purchase.



JURASSIC PARK [1993]

Amiga, NES, Mega Drive, Master System, Game Boy, GameGear

Ocean released three very distinct *Jurassic Park* games: an isometric action adventure for the NES and Game Boy, an isometic title with first-person perspective play for the SNES and an isometric/first-person game which had improved resolution and artwork for the PC and Amiga. Now the firm understood there were distinct consumer trends as opposed to the catch-all 8-bit and 16-bit markets. Each game did the licence full justice.



MR NUTZ [1994]

Amiga, Mega Drive, SNES, Game Boy

Ocean went all cutesy and designed a furry mascot to plonk into a new platform game. It could have been lazy – something that looked highly polished for the kids – but while it did look stunning, the level design stood the game head and shoulders above most other platformers and created a very enjoyable title. Rusty controls marred an otherwise fluid game but that's just nit picking over a solid, playable title.



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS: SHADOW OVE

ELF HAS SHOT THE FOOD…



- » **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM
- » **RELEASED:** 1996
- » **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ARCADE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £120 + FOR ORIGINAL PCB BOARD



HISTORY

Capcom has made a string of fantastic scrolling fighters over the years, but the superb *Dungeons & Dragons: Shadow Over Mystara* remains one of my all-time favourites.

Of course, Capcom is no stranger to the scrolling beat-'em-up genre, and over the years has delivered some exquisitely designed brawlers including the mighty *Final Fight*, *Alien Vs Predator, Capcom Commando, Knights Of The Round* and many, many more. For this particular freak though, it was the acquisition of the *Dungeons & Dragons* licence that proved to be the most exciting.

After seeing the world-famous RPG linked to bog standard strategy titles and RPGs, a scrolling fighter was a revelation and suited the game perfectly. While *Tower Of Doom* introduced plenty of great ideas to Capcom's already proven scrolling fighters, it was the superior *Shadow Over Mystara* that remains a pinnacle of the genre.

Special moves, a variety of astonishingly powerful spells and more monsters than you could shake a +5 Mace of Disruption at, all combined to create one of the most perfectly balanced fighters I've ever played. Weapons, spells and magical items could be selected at the touch of a button; special moves could be activated by pulling off *Street Fighter II*-styled joystick manipulations, while branched choices at the beginning of certain levels would stop the game from getting repetitive.

Then there are the game's many impressive bosses to contend with. *Shadow Over Mystara* features some massive sprites – ranging from lightning-throwing demons to dragons and all are animated to perfection. The same is true of all the other enemies you encounter, and of course, each of the game's six heroes have also been given plenty of care and attention, with a sneaky female thief and a mage that wields a frightful array of devastating spells having joined the original game's Dwarf, Cleric, Fighter and Elf.

Don't be fooled by its geeky licence, Capcom's brawler is one of the finest available and should be experienced by fans of Capcom and the genre alike.



ER MYSTARA





Year Released: 1990 (JAPAN) 1991 (USA) 1992 (UK)

Original Price: £149.99 (INCLUDING SUPER MARIO WORLD)

Buy it now for: £20+

Associated Magazines: Nintendo Magazine System, Superplay, Total, N-Force, SNES Force

Why the SNES was great… Nintendo's 16 bit powerhouse represents the true "Golden Age" of videogaming as the likes of Konami, Squaresoft and even Nintendo itself have arguably never been on better form than when designing games for this machine. The best SNES releases featured both flawless gameplay and graphics and set a high benchmark for quality entertainment software that, in many cases, endures to this day.



SNES

BY RELEASING THE SUPER NES A YEAR LATER THAN ITS NEAREST RIVALS, NINTENDO FACED THE DAUNTING TASK OF CONVERTING A GENERATION OF GAMERS TO ITS NEW CONSOLE. IT COULD HAVE GONE HORRIBLY WRONG BUT, AS ASHLEY DAY RECALLS, ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE IF YOU HAVE THE BEST GAMES.

With a NES in thirty per cent of American homes and the word 'Famicom' synonymous with videogames in Japan, Nintendo was understandably reluctant to release a successor to its best selling console and chose to support the ageing 8-bit console for as long as it could. It was, however, only a matter of time before the advance of technology allowed Nintendo's competition to take the lead and by 1988 both NEC's PC Engine and Sega's Mega Drive offered a far more powerful entertainment experience. Nintendo could no longer rest on its laurels and secretly began work on its next 'Family Computer': the Super Famicom.

The 16-bit-system had been developed and designed by Masayuki Uemura, who had spent months attempting to make the Super Famicom backwards compatible with Famicom cartridges but had found that the massive leap in technology had set Nintendo's machine so far in advance of its predecessor that building in Famicom compatibility would have been far too costly. Without backwards compatibility to bridge the transition between consoles, Nintendo would need an irresistible launch line-up to tempt existing Famicom owners to upgrade. Knowing this, Nintendo's president, Hiroshi Yamauchi needed his best man on the job and, as soon as development of *Super Mario Bros 3* was complete, he charged Shigeru Miyamoto and his thirty-man team with the task of exploring the new hardware's game-playing capabilities.

One of the biggest tricks that the hardware had up its sleeve was the now infamous Mode 7: a graphical hardware mode that allowed sprites to zoom in and out and rotate in a way that simulated a 3D depth-of-field effect. Neither the Mega Dive nor PC Engine was

To CD or not CD.

Wishing to exploit the advantages of the growing CD-ROM medium, Nintendo had planned a SNES CD-ROM drive from as early as 1988 and had courted both Sony and Phillips with the proposal. The fruits of those early endeavours were a series of Nintendo licensed games for the Phillips CDI and a prototype add-on from Sony that was eventually developed into the PlayStation we know today. If Nintendo had not backed out of the SNES/PlayStation partnership then the videogame landscape would be unrecognisable and this RetroInspection might tell the tale of a very different console. It is unclear how many games were in development for the SNES-CD but we do know that *Secret Of Mana* was originally CD-based with a planned branching story. The game had to be dramatically cut back to fit on cartridge: a process that was instrumental in convincing Squaresoft to move *Final Fantasy VII* from N64 to PlayStation.



» *Secret Of Mana* originally started off as a CD title, complete with branching storylines







» The Japanese packaging evoked a playful image that was missing from the mature design of the console



» The SNES Jr made it to the USA but its rarity makes it much easier to find the Japanese version

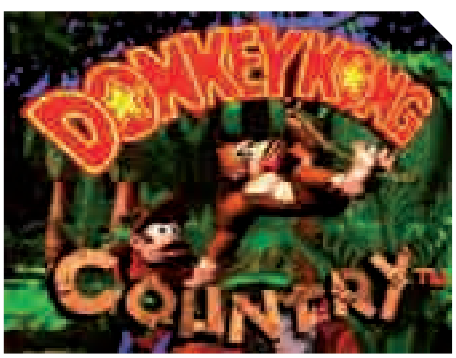
capable of sprite scaling on such a level so Nintendo decided that the first three Super Famicom games would take advantage of the innovative feature. After 15 solid months of R&D, Miyamoto and Co would begin work on *F-Zero*, *Pilotwings* and *Super Mario Bros 4*, which would all use Mode 7 to varying degrees. However, with only ten months until launch day, the team was only able to complete two of the games on time and *Pilotwings* (the most technically demanding of the three) slipped by a month.

By 20 November 1990, Japanese demand for Nintendo's new console had reached fever-pitch and any worries that the machine would fail to entice existing Famicom owners were washed away. Demand for the console was so high that, for example, the Hankyu department store in Osaka had to stop taking preorders only a week after they started. In retrospect the release of the Super Famicom heralded the age of hysteria that has defined every hardware launch to this day. By 20 November, total pre-orders numbered in excess of 1.5 million yet only 300,000 machines shipped. Fearing that several Yakuza groups planned to hijack the Super Famicom shipment, to sell on at artificially inflated prices, Nintendo commenced 'Operation Midnight Shipping' in which the entire batch of 300,000 machines were hauled across Japan in the very early hours of the 20th. Thanks to these dramatic efforts, the launch was a rousing success: the Super Famicom sold out in seconds, even with only two launch titles. Yet when one of those titles was the sequel to the best selling game of all time, success was a certainty. Despite being the least technically demanding of the Super Famicom's launch titles it was *Super Mario Bros 4: Super Mario World* that shifted the machine. *Super Mario World* expanded on its predecessors by offering finely tuned platforming gameplay, beautiful pastel graphics and a staggering 79 levels. The game is still remembered, 16 years on, as the best 2D platform game of all time so it is no surprise that Nintendo relied on it to push sales of their console.

When it came time to introduce the renamed Super Nintendo Entertainment System to the UK (a typical 17 months after the Japanese release) Nintendo made the bold decision to bundle *Super Mario World* with every SNES console. Making for one of the best freebies of all time, *Mario* helped to move many a SNES into British living rooms that summer, but arriving two years after the Mega Drive proved very costly. Sega's black beauty was phenomenally popular in Europe (thanks to its exclusive sports simulations and arcade conversions) and left little room for competition. It wasn't until Christmas of 1992 that the tide truly began to turn, thanks to Capcom's *Street Fighter II*. The original arcade game had spawned a worldwide craze, the likes of which had not been seen since the days of *Pac-Man* and *Space Invaders*, and whichever home console netted a conversion first would benefit from a serious rise in sales. Sure enough, Nintendo managed to snag Capcom's seminal brawler a full year before Sega and stole a significant slice of the UK market in the process. A pattern



» *Fire Emblem: Thracia 776* was one of the last games to be released for the Super Famicom in 1999



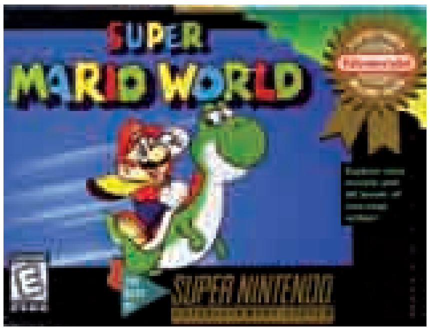
» *Donkey Kong Country* used Rare's "Advanced Computer Modelling" to create previously inconceivable visuals on the ageing SNES



» An enigmatic 2-page advert for *Secret Of Mana* that bravely chose not to use screenshots

» **Right:** The Super Game Boy allowed GB games to be played on a TV set and expanded the SNES library by thousands. **Right:** An advert for the surprisingly decent SNES conversion of *Street Fighter Alpha 2*













» **Top Left and right:** By tying the release of *Super Mario World* to the SNES Nintendo ensure great success for their new console. The "Mode 7" effects in *F-Zero* really showed off the power of the Super Nintendo. **Bottom left and right:** *Star Fox* (renamed *Star Wing* in the UK) used extra hardware to push the SNES beyond its limitations. By arriving so late in the console's life, *Yoshi's Island* went tragically unnoticed



A Room with a Satellaview

The Satellaview has such an unusual history that we could fill a RetroInspection on this intriguing add-on alone. The device allowed the Super Famicom to acquire games from St Giga: a popular Japanese satellite service. At prescheduled times the service would broadcast a chosen game which could then be downloaded onto a flash cart and played "offline". The service was discontinued in 2000 but it is still possible to find flash carts with games saved to them. These extreme rarities should be of particular interest to Nintendo fans as the service featured exclusive versions of classic Nintendo games including *Zelda*, *Famicom Wars*, *Fire Emblem* and *Excitebike*. There was even a text based sequel to *Chrono Trigger* (known as *Radical Dreamers*) and some games, like the satellite version of *A Link To The Past*, could only be played at certain times of day because the Satellaview broadcast live voice-acting into the game.

was starting to form: although Sega's success was assured by its in-house conversions and its relationship with EA, it was Nintendo's SNES that turned the most heads by continually providing the classiest most desirable games. It started with *Mario* and *Street Fighter* and continued through *Zelda*, *Secret Of Mana*, *Axelay*, *Super Mario Kart* and hundreds of other top-drawer games that would go on to steal the hearts of hardcore and casual gamers alike.

As the years went by and more powerful competitors (like the 3DO and Jaguar) fell by the wayside the SNES' excellent range of software continued to impress with the aid of Nintendo's quality control and, when it became apparent that the console was beginning to show its age, Nintendo built partnerships with third-party developers to find new ways of making their games look next generation even if the original hardware wasn't. The first of these partnerships came about when the UK's Argonaut Software impressed Nintendo by programming the monochrome Game Boy to display full 3D graphics. On the strength of the Game Boy title, two of Argonaut's employees, Giles Goddard and Dylan Cuthbert, achieved what few British coders have and secured positions at Nintendo's Kyoto headquarters. There they developed the "Mario Chip" (later renamed Super FX) a cartridge embedded co-processor that would allow the SNES to display true 3D polygonal visuals for the first time. The first Super FX game they created, with the legendary design talents of Shigeru Miyamoto, was *Star Fox*: an astounding 3D space combat game that wowed SNES owners of 1993, who couldn't believe the console was capable of such graphics. The following year another incredibly talented UK software house found a way to push the SNES beyond its preconceived limits. Rare, who had previously pushed the ZX Spectrum much further than anyone thought possible, had been using Silicon Graphics workstations to test concepts for Nintendo's next console: the Ultra 64. In doing so they discovered a way of using high quality pre-rendered graphics on the humble SNES, which they used to create the beautiful *Donkey Kong Country* and an arcade conversion of the previously Ultra 64 bound *Killer Instinct*. With the PlayStation and the Saturn on the horizon the startling looks of Rare and Argonaut's games must have made the SNES a very tempting reason to not upgrade.

Nintendo's luck couldn't last forever though and, despite pushing the hardware to its limits, sales of the SNES slowed to a trickle in the UK – due in no small part to the globe-consuming success of the PlayStation. Nevertheless, like all good consoles, the SNES was due a last hurrah and got it in the form of *Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island*. The gorgeous platform game used a combination of Mode 7 and the Super FX2 chip to pump out some of the best effects the SNES had ever seen and with the classic Nintendo gameplay it became one of the console's most loved titles. The gloriously beautiful platform game proved that the Super Nintendo was far from dead but was sadly lost in the excitement of the new era of 3D games and the hype surrounding *Super Mario 64*. Though it attained outstanding critical acclaim, *Yoshi's Island* was a commercial flop in the UK and was one of the last significant SNES titles to see a European release alongside *Donkey Kong Country 3* and *Street Fighter Alpha 2* in December 1996.

As is typical of Japanese consoles, the native Super Famicom lived on much longer than the Western SNES thanks to continued hardware support and a greater demand for software. The Satellaview (see boxout) broadcasted new Super Famicom games directly into players' homes from 1995 to 2000 and, in doing so, kept the large user base active. A new hardware model was introduced in 1998: the Super Famicom Jr was a smaller, sleeker unit that was affordably priced as an alternative to the N64 and allegedly small enough to be sold in street vending machines. Top quality games continued to be released until 2000 with *Fire Emblem: Thracia 776* and a series of *Picross* titles being the most noteworthy.

Production of the Super Famicom finally ceased in late 2003, which may seem like a good innings until you consider that production of the original Famicom was discontinued in the same year. Regardless, throughout its thirteen-year lifespan, the SNES/Super Famicom achieved widespread success and adoration thanks to Nintendo's willingness to keep the machine alive through groundbreaking hardware expansions and a virtually limitless string of superb releases.



» Hiroshi Yamauchi was the head of Nintendo for 53 years and was instrumental to its early success



SNES

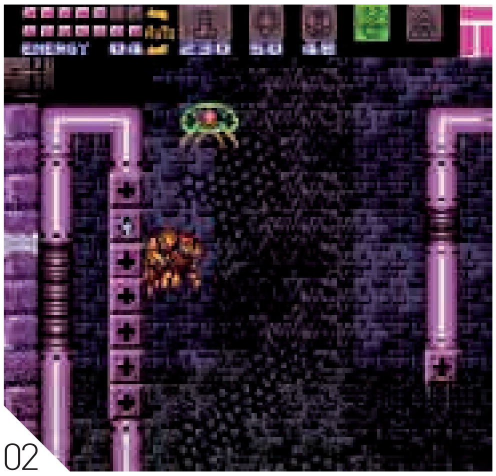


PERFECT TEN GAMES

This has been one of the hardest top tens to put together, a fitting tribute to the fact that Nintendo's SNES had a phenomenal amount of great games available for it. Before you write in though, any top ten is going to be entirely subjective and of course open to violent debate, and that's what Retro Gamer is all about. Like-minded gamers indulging in sheer nostalgia. Bring it on.



01



02



03



04

SUPER MARIO KART

» **RELEASED:** 1993
» **PUBLISHED BY:** NINTENDO
» **CREATED BY:** NINTENDO
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SUPER MARIO BROS

01 **We've been playing the original *Super Mario Kart* on and off now for a staggering 13 years and it still remains fresher than a baker's dozen that's just popped out the oven.** Meticulously designed circuits, a well-balanced range of weapons – including the greatly missed feather – and impressive visuals proved perfectly that there was so much more to everyone's favourite plumber than simply jumping on wayward Koopas. While the cups provided plenty of fun, it was the stunning time trial mode and sublime multi-player games that kept us constantly going back for just one more go. Thank god Retro Gamer wasn't around at the time of *Mario Kart*'s release; we'd have never got the damned magazine finished on time!

SUPER METROID

» **RELEASED:** 1994
» **PUBLISHED BY:** NINTENDO
» **CREATED BY:** INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** BADVANCE WARS DS

02 ***Super Metroid* is a game that works on a variety of levels. While some marvelled at its motherly themes, stunningly created environments and remarkable attention to detail, others were simply impressed with the sheer amount of crap you could blow up in it.** Regardless of how you feel about Samus's only 16-bit adventure, there's no denying that *Super Metroid* remains a staggering achievement that perfectly combines the rush of shooting huge bosses with the wonder of exploring vast new areas like no other SNES game around. Little wonder then that it took Nintendo eight years to come up with a sequel that could do it justice.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST

» **RELEASED:** 1992
» **PUBLISHED BY:** NINTENDO
» **CREATED BY:** NINTENDO
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE OCARINA OF TIME

03 **There's no denying the superiority of *Ocarina Of Time*, but *A Link To The Past* remains a wonderfully accomplished adventure that deserves to sit proudly in every SNES owner's collection.** Every dungeon you explore is crafted to perfection, and while they start off easy, you'll soon be scratching your head over Miyamoto's deviously designed puzzles. The many weapons you discover are well balanced and every encountered boss is a masterstroke in design. Then of course you have the two unique worlds that Link can eventually switch between, thus making an already sprawling game even larger. Quite simply one of the finest 16-bit adventures ever made.

CONTRA III: THE ALIEN WARS

» **RELEASED:** 1992
» **PUBLISHED BY:** KONAMI
» **CREATED BY:** KONAMI
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SUPER CASTLEVANIA IV

04 **Konami released some outstanding titles for Nintendo's 16-bit wonder, but this cracking effort from 1992 is arguably one of its best efforts.**

Each level is a rollercoaster ride of destruction and featured the SNES hardware on fine form. Sprites are full of detail, the game's many bosses a joy to behold, and there's a ridiculous amount of Mode 7 trickery going on. Add in a fantastic, stomping soundtrack, an awesome array of different weapons and some groovy overhead levels (that can be rotated with the left and right triggers) and you have a run-'n'-gun title that would be essential on any format.

AXELAY

» **RELEASED:** 1993
» **PUBLISHED BY:** KONAMI
» **CREATED BY:** KONAMI
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** GRADIUS III

05 **There's a host of great shooters available for the SNES, but few can compare to the brilliance that is Konami's stunning *Axelay*.** From its quasi-3D levels to its utterly amazing music, every moment of *Axelay* is exhilarating to play through. While the level design and available weapons are worthy of praise, it's the immense, striking bosses the game constantly throws at you that truly astound. Huge metallic spiders, colossal ED-209 styled mechs and a gigantic lava creature are just a few of the mayors you have to deal with and each is breath-taking to behold. Why's it's never been released on the GBA we'll never know…



05



06



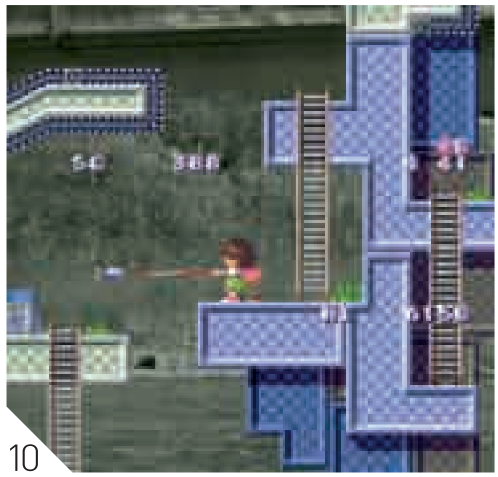
07



08



09



10

SUPER MARIO ALL-STARS

» **RELEASED:** 1993
» **PUBLISHED BY:** NINTENDO
» **CREATED BY:** NINTENDO
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE

06 What's better than three classic *Mario* NES outings on one cartridge? Why, three *Mario* NES games with improved aesthetics and a fourth exclusive title that had only originally appeared in Japan of course!

All-Stars' triple whammy of *Super Mario Bros 1*, *2* and *3* made it incredible value for money and were great examples of taking old games and updating them for a newer platform. Add in *Super Mario Bros: The Lost Levels*, which was effectively a tougher version of the original game and allowed you to choose from either brother and you had an amazingly comprehensive package. Finally, if you bought the version that came boxed with a SNES you received *Super Mario World* on the cartridge. Bargain!

CHRONO TRIGGER

» **RELEASED:** 1995
» **PUBLISHED BY:** SQUARESOFT
» **CREATED BY:** SQUARESOFT
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** FINAL FANTASY X

07 It would have been all too easy to go with Squaresoft's *Secret Of Mana*, so we've decided to focus on this little beauty instead.

While Squaresoft's epic RPG borrows plenty of ideas from the *Final Fantasy* series, you just can't help but be impressed by the sheer amount of love that has gone into crafting this astonishing RPG. Although the central storyline is fairly predictable, it soon begins to twist and turn all over the place and introduces plenty of memorable characters and sub plots. The combat system is a joy to use and the use of sound throughout is outstanding. It all combines to create one of the most engrossing RPGs we've ever played. Utterly essential.

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA II

» **RELEASED:** 1996
» **PUBLISHED BY:** CAPCOM
» **CREATED BY:** CAPCOM
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SUPER GHOULS 'N GHOSTS

08 Capcom's second *Alpha* title was released late in the SNES's life, and as a result, was sadly overlooked by a great many gamers who had moved on to the newer, flashier consoles.

Their loss was our gain however, as it's easily one the best brawlers on Nintendo's 16-bit wonder. Great looking sprites, a solid roster of characters, new moves, plenty of additional animation and thumping good gameplay made *Alpha II* a winner. We've no idea why the first game didn't appear on the SNES, but Capcom more than made up for it with this excellent sequel. An outstanding fighter that deserves to be in everyone's SNES collection.

PILOTWINGS

» **RELEASED:** 1993
» **PUBLISHED BY:** NINTENDO
» **CREATED BY:** NINTENDO
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** DONKEY KONG

09 The Mode 7 chip was used in countless numbers of SNES games, but never was its appearance more noticeable than in the wondrous *Pilotwings*.

Taking control of a budding pilot, all the game required you to do was master licences for four different events: Skydiving, Rocketbelt, Light Plane and Hang Glider. While some of *Pilotwings*' events could be tricky to get to grips with, the elation you felt when they were finally mastered more than made up for it. Thanks to the excellent Mode 7 effects the sense of scale you encountered as you flew through the air was breath-taking, and wait until you finally get to use the hang glider… Marvellous.

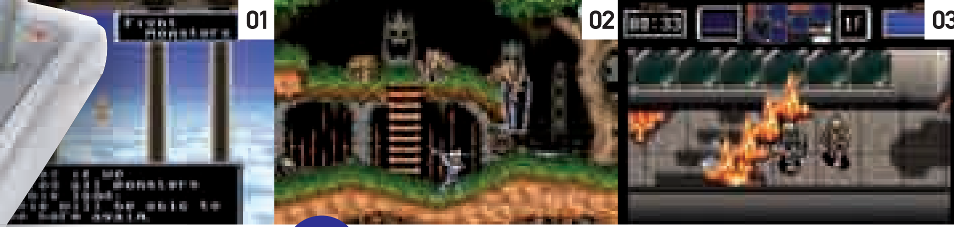
UMIHARA KAWASE

» **RELEASED:** 1994
» **PUBLISHED BY:** NHK
» **CREATED BY:** TNN
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SHIJOU SAIKYOU LEAGUE SERIE A: ACE STRIKER

10 It seems only fair to put at least one quirky Japanese title in the top ten, so our vote goes to the delightful *Umihara Kawase*.

Taking control of an adorably cute little girl, the aim of each stage is simple – avoid the bizarre fishy enemies and reach the door on each exit. Of course, said exit is often out of reach, and with your little tyke not being that great a jumper she has to rely on a handy elastic rope to get her around. Think *Bionic Commando* but with some decent rope physics thrown into the mix and you have a good idea of what to expect.







SNES and the rest...

Nintendo's 16-bit console was an absolute powerhouse of a machine and supported an amazing array of different genres. From hit arcade conversions to the incredibly obscure, the SNES had something for everyone.

01 ACTRAISER
02 SUPER GHOULS 'N' GHOSTS
03 THE FIREMEN
04 KILLER INSTINCT
05 DONALD DUCK
06 SUPER BOMBERMAN
07 THE ADVENTURES OF BATMAN & ROBIN
08 MAGIC SWORD
09 CONTRA III: THE ALIEN WAR
10 GANBARE GOEMON 2
11 SHADOWRUN
12 TERRANIGMA
13 MEGA MAN X
14 CANNON FODDER
15 SUPER METROID
16 POCKY & ROCKY
17 DONKEY KONG COUNTRY
18 JOE & MAC
19 PILOTWINGS
20 TETRIS BATTLE GAIDEN
21 SUPER MARIO ALL-STARS
22 ALADDIN
23 BREATH OF FIRE
24 GOKUJOU PARODIUS
25 STUNT RACE FX
26 EYE OF THE BEHOLDER
27 SIM CITY
28 STARWING
29 FIRST SAMURAI
30 ARKANOID: DOH IT AGAIN
31 BLACK THORNE
32 PRINCE OF PERSIA
33 CACOMA KNIGHT
34 SUPER STREET FIGHTER 2: TURBO 'HYPER FIGHTING
35 THE ADDAMS FAMILY
36 FINAL FIGHT GUY
37 MICKY MANIA
38 SUPER MARIO WORLD
39 CYBERNATOR
40 LEMMINGS
41 ACTRAISER
42 BATTLETOADS & DOUBLE DRAGON: THE ULTIMATE TEAM
43 THE CHAOS ENGINE
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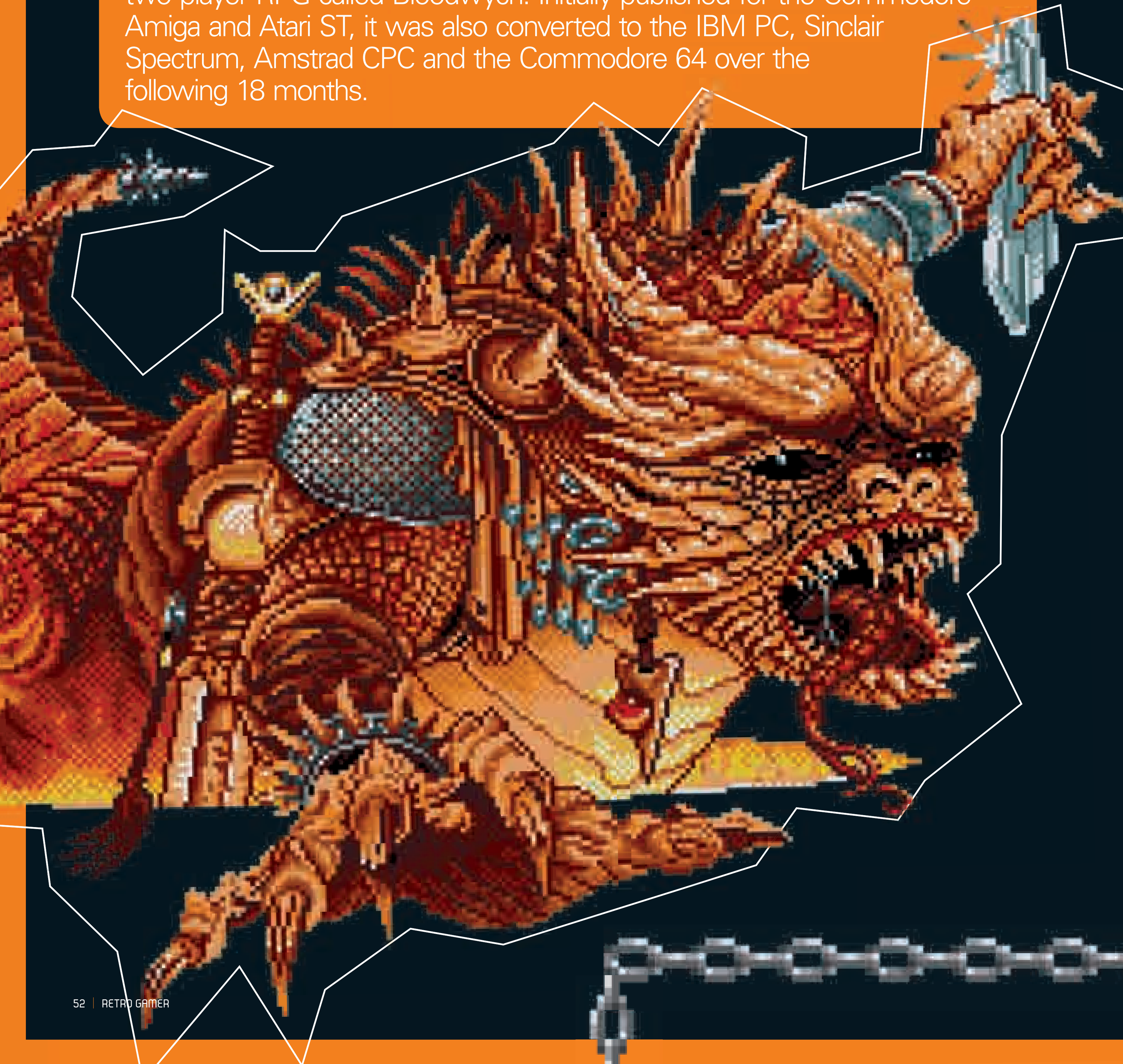



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THE MAKING OF...

BLOODWYCH

In September 1989, Image Works released a popular but curiously named two-player RPG called Bloodwych. Initially published for the Commodore Amiga and Atari ST, it was also converted to the IBM PC, Sinclair Spectrum, Amstrad CPC and the Commodore 64 over the following 18 months.





"TO THWART THE PLAYER, THE CITIZENS OF TRAZERE HAD BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO PSYCHOTIC MONSTERS..."

B*loodwych* was designed and created by Anthony Taglione (better known in the gaming world as Tag), his younger brother Philip (who coded the 8-bit conversions) and their friend Pete James, who co-designed and created the graphics.

The origins of the game can be traced to Tag's University days in Reading: "I used to play *Dungeons & Dragons* type games at University and remember one night trying to fall asleep wondering how to put *D&D* onto a computer. My friend and colleague, Pete James, was suffering similar insomnia and, being an artist, was drawing screens for a first-person perspective game on his Commodore 64. He fancied creating a two-player game and had the idea of a chess-like game based in a dungeon."

It was also around this time that FTL's *Dungeon Master* was released for the Atari ST, as Pete James recalls… "One day I got a phone call from Tag asking me to come over to his house to see this new game. That was my first encounter with *Dungeon Master*. We played it to the end, adopting a team system where I controlled the keyboard and Tag the mouse. I think we completed it three times using this method, once with a party made up entirely of short people."



» In the 16-bit versions the player had to persuade other characters to join their party (Atari ST)

Inspired by the game, Tag and Pete suggested to Mirrorsoft (the European distributor for *Dungeon Master*) that they could write a Commodore 64 version for it. Whilst Mirrorsoft deliberated over the commercial viability of the project, Tag and Pete proceeded with their own two-player maze game design. The idea of a C64 conversion of *Dungeon Master* came to nothing in the end, but it gave Tag and Pete a foot-in-the-door at Mirrorsoft, who agreed to fund the development of their *Crystal Maze* game on the proviso that the lead versions were 16-bit.

Whilst Tag quickly learned the intricacies of programming for the 68000-based ST and Amiga, Pete upgraded his graphics and designed the initial maps for each dungeon level. In total, the finished game had over forty different levels to explore, spread across the Treihadwyl cellar and the five different towers – Serpent, Moon, Chaos, Dragon and finally Zendik's.

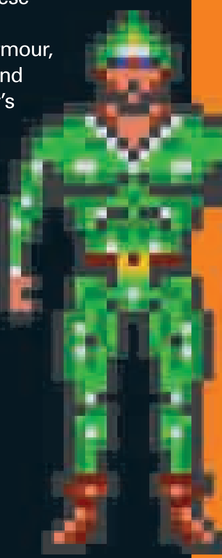
By the time the game was halfway through development, Richard O'Brien had stolen a march on them by announcing "*The Crystal Maze*" TV series for Channel 4 in the UK. Forced to seek an alternative name, Tag and Pete eventually came up with an alternative, as Pete elaborates. "We thought *Bloodwych* sounded more appropriate for the type of game that the simple maze design had evolved into."

The plot behind the new game was traditional fantasy fare. Four crystals needed recovering from four towers, which then had to be taken to the fifth and final tower where they could be used to defeat the evil Zendik, Lord of Entropy. To thwart the player, the citizens of Trazere had been transformed into psychotic monsters and various challenging puzzles also obstructed the adventurers' progress.

The puzzles were generally designed around keys, pressure plates, gems, buttons and doors. Safe rooms to rest in (character's gained experience levels and could buy extra spells whilst they slept) and shops to trade items were also liberally scattered throughout the dungeons. Lastly, regenerating rooms allowed dead adventurer's bones to be brought back to life.

The RPG elements of the design included Psyche types. Each type was represented by a playing card suit: Spades for Fighters, Clubs for Mages, Hearts for Adventurers and Diamonds for Assassins. Their magical allegiance was represented by a colour – Red for Fire, Green for Earth, Blue for Moon (Psychic power) and Yellow for Chaos.

Bloodwych also featured a plethora of special items to collect. In true RPG fashion, these items included various swords, axes, staffs, armour, gloves, wands, bows and arrows. Each character's Armour Class (AC) could improve or worsen depending on the type of armour and shield worn; the lower the AC rating the better the protection. The player's other ability stats included Strength (ST), Agility (AG), Intelligence (IN), Charisma (CH), Vitality (VI), Food levels and their crucial Hit Points (HP).



TWO'S COMPANY

Bloodwych allowed the player to choose their adventurers from a selection of 16 pre-defined characters. This included human and non-human characters with wonderful names like Blodwyn Stonemaiden, Mr. Flay Sepulcrast, Thai Chang of Yinn and Zastaph Mantric.

The thing that made *Bloodwych* stand out from the crowd was the simultaneous two-player option. Using the same computer, two players could explore the same dungeon levels at the same time with two independent parties. The screen was split horizontally, allowing the players to have their own view of the dungeon at the top or bottom halves of the screen.

The game didn't require direct co-operation between the players, but it certainly helped when fighting the hordes of monsters in each dungeon! Despite other technical limitations, all of the 8-bit conversions included the simultaneous two-player option that made *Bloodwych* unique.

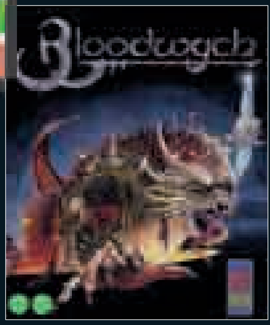


» Players could choose two groups to go on the quest simultaneously (Amstrad CPC)

IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** HEWSON CONSULTANTS
» **DEVELOPER:** STEVE TURNER
» **RELEASED:** 1986
» **GENRE:** PUZZLE/ADVENTURE
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £2+



THE MAKING OF... BLOODWYCH

"RENOWNED FANTASY ARTIST CHRIS ACHILLEOS WAS HIRED TO CREATE THE BOX ARTWORK."

Common keys would open or lock a typical dungeon portcullis and gold coinage was used for buying and selling items at the shops. Various other special keys unlocked and opened specific doors. Once a key was used on a door, the key would disappear.

Bloodwych's spell system was simple and easy to use. Each adventurer started the game with a spell book and one suitable spell. As they defeated the monsters each character gained vital experience. Increasing their experience levels could only happen whilst resting, and gaining a level also gave them the chance to buy one new spell to add to their spell book. Early spells included Armour (extra protection), Magelock (to lock or unlock common doors), Missile, Confuse (temporary disorientation of the enemy) and Deflect.

TALKING TO MONSTERS

Bloodwych also included a rudimentary communications system. The original idea was quite simple, and it grew as the game developed. A number of basic options lead to other sub-options. Players could try talking to other non-player characters in the dungeon. They could ask their name (an option originally suggested by Anthony's wife) or their occupation, as well as request information on other items, characters or rumours. Fellow party members could also be commended, reprimanded, recruited or dismissed.

By making a character 'wait', the remaining adventurers could go elsewhere in the dungeon. They could then 'view' the dungeon through the eyes of the waiting character and then 'call' them back into the party later on. Although this feature could in theory be used to help solve some of the puzzles found in the game, players seldom used it as the 'waiting' character couldn't be controlled independently and was merely a passive observer.

THE ART OF BLOODWYCH

Renowned fantasy artist Chris Achilleos was hired to create the box artwork, and his painting of a "crystal guardian" for *Bloodwych* was the first of many paintings that he produced for Mirrorsoft over the next two years.

Chris remembers how much he enjoyed producing the artwork, "It was wonderful to be given the freedom to paint whatever I wanted. The only brief I was given was that it had to be a monster guarding a crystal, in a tunnel-like environment. The rest was left up to me."

Having finished the painting, the creature was then incorporated into the game itself as the Behemoth, located in the final level of Zendik's tower. The painting was also re-used for the *Bloodwych* Data Disk packaging just six months later, and was used extensively in magazine adverts with the concluding tag-line (pun intended!) "*Bloodwych* – For Those Who Dare!"

DEMOS AND DATA DISKS

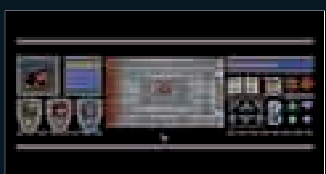
A playable ST demo of *Bloodwych* was produced for the first ever issue of ST Amiga Format magazine just a couple of months ahead of the impending launch, featuring the first level of the game.

Bloodwych divided RPG fans down the middle. Those who liked it were mainly attracted by the multi-player element. Those who didn't appreciate its finer points usually complained about the style of graphics, the simplistic animation and the small size of the dungeon 'window' – a technical decision explained by Philip Taglione. "The small screen was simply to allow the code to run fast enough, since we used a four level deep view, where most RPG games of that sort stopped at three levels. Of course it meant more processing to achieve this." The game was well received by the computer press, and it sold enough to merit a Data Disk release for the ST and Amiga. More than just extra levels, *Bloodwych: The Extended Levels* data disk introduced fresh spells to the spell book and allowed players to recruit monsters into their party.

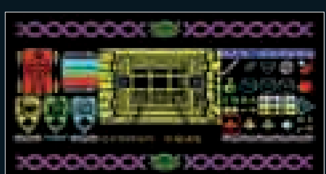
The only way to play the extended levels was to import a saved game from the original game. The data disk featured much tougher opponents than before, so the recommended experience level for the imported



» Info could be divulged in the 16-bit versions by talking to Non-Player-Characters (Atari ST)



» Many of the puzzles involved pressing wall buttons to open new dungeon areas (Atari ST)



» Locked doors were just one of the obstacles to completing the quest for the crystals (Spectrum 48k)

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

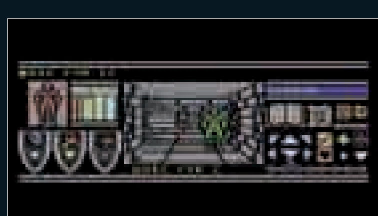
ANTHONY TAGLIONE

THE LORDS OF MIDNIGHT
(conversion with Malcolm Hellon)
SYSTEMS: C64
YEAR: 1984

SPY VS. SPY
(conversion with Malcolm Hellon)
SYSTEMS: SPECTRUM 48K
YEAR: 1984

TOTAL WAR SERIES
(Creative Assembly)
SYSTEMS: IBM PC
YEAR: 2000 – PRESENT





» Four against one was hardly a fair fight! (Commodore 64)



» The Paralyze spell was just one of the ways of defending your party from attack (Atari ST)



» Attacking monsters from the side was a good tactic during combat (Atari ST)

"THE AMSTRAD CPC VERSION, WENT ON TO WIN 'ADVENTURE GAME OF THE YEAR 1990'"

adventurers was level 14. If the imported characters' experience fell below that level, the Data Disk would temporarily accelerate their progress. The package also included a free 'hints & tips' booklet for the original dungeons.

CONVERSIONS

The 8-bit conversions of the original Bloodwych game followed in 1990. Tag's brother Philip wrote the Z80 versions (Sinclair Spectrum 48k and Amstrad CPC), squeezing everything he could get out of the meagre amounts of available memory. Aside from the memory issue, the Spectrum 48k version had to employ a monochromatic 3D dungeon, which meant some of the objects left lying on dungeon floors were difficult to spot.

Some game features and graphics also had to be sacrificed for the 8-bit conversions. For example, most of the communications system was exorcised; talking was only allowed when the player encountered a shopkeeper. Thanks to the lack of signs on the walls, the only way a player knew they were at a shop was because the shopkeeper didn't attack them! The grandiose stone staircases from the ST and Amiga were changed to ladders, and the shelves that adorned walls were quite literally shelved! With the Z80 conversions finished, Philip then wrote the Commodore 64 version with help from his brother Tag. All three 8-bit versions featured the same reduced features and the same map data, yet these limitations didn't prevent the Amstrad CPC version from winning 'Adventure Game of the Year 1990' from the French Computer Press.

Walking Circles (led by Graham Stafford, formerly of Crystal Computing and Design Design fame) wrote the IBM PC conversion of *Bloodwych* in 1991, based on Tag's 68000-source code. PC *Bloodwych* was the only version to feature in-game music, written by erstwhile games musician David Whittaker. Konami released the PC version in the US, but chose a white box (similar to the Data Disk release in Europe) rather than the original design.

The ST and Amiga versions of *Bloodwych* were subsequently re-released in 1991 via Mirror Image (Mirrorsoft's new budget range), just a few short months before Mirrorsoft's untimely demise. *Bloodwych* ultimately become part of an unofficial trilogy of RPGs created by the same developers, including a prequel and a re-imagining in proper 3D. It was a very popular RPG in its day, and there are a number of websites around today that cover the intricacies of the game in detail, along with a handful of home-brew 3D remakes currently in development.



OTHER GAMES IN THE SERIES:
Legend
Worlds of Legend: Son of the Empire
Hexx! Heresy of the Wizard

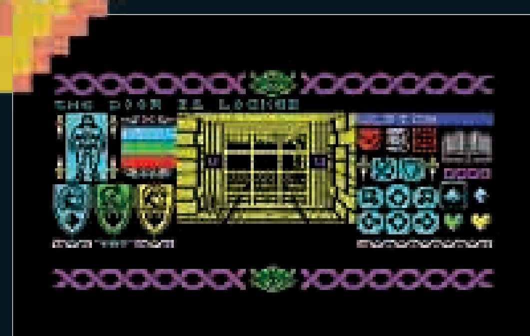
LAST OF THE BLOODWYCH

The last version of *Bloodwych* was for the short-lived Amstrad GX400 console. Philip Taglione took the existing Amstrad CPC game and created a cartridge version, minus the usual 'save game' functionality. In its place was a pass-code generator, which created a long code consisting of numbers and letters. The codes were presented at the end of each dungeon level. When entered into the game, the codes remembered the items and general stats that belonged to the adventurers and placed them at the start of the next dungeon level.

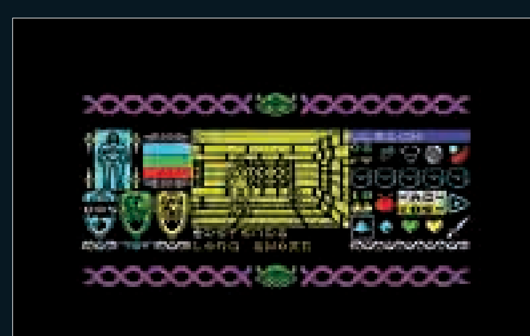
Other changes were made for the GX400 version. The full communication system from the 16-bit versions was implemented as the extra code could be called from the cartridge as if it was RAM; an improved cursor was also included, along with a 'dancing' *Bloodwych* logo on the title screen and other minor technical improvements.

Unfortunately, all the development work was to no avail, as Mirrorsoft took the decision not to publish, mostly due to poor sales of the GX400 hardware. The decision hardly mattered, as Mirrorsoft went into Administration soon afterwards. The GX400 cartridge version therefore remains the one 'lost' version of *Bloodwych*.









» Tag's brother Paul worked on all the Z80 versions of *Bloodwych*, including the Spectrum

遠くの稀で、エキゾチックなゲームを愛する人々のため

FULL OF EASTERN

A SHOOTER WORTH CROSSING BOUNDARIES FOR

BORDER DOWN

While it was possible to buy 8-bit consoles such as the PC Engine and Famicom (providing you knew where to look), it wasn't until the introduction of the 16-bit machines that import gaming truly took off in the UK. Each month, Retro Gamer will take a look at classic Japanese games that criminally never made it to UK shores. This month we take a look at G.Rev's superb Dreamcast shoot-'em-up Border Down

IN THE KNOW



- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **DEVELOPER:** G.REV
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** DREAMCAST
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE FOR:** N@OMI
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £50 +
- » **CAN'T IMPORT? THEN WHY NOT TRY:** GIGA WING

For the UK, at least, there were no horizontal shooters for Dreamcast. To the uninformed, there was little difference in orientation, but the reality was that vertical was wholly dissimilar – and some say inferior – to horizontal variants. *Giga Wing*, then, was the closest approximation, carrying none of the weight, graphical prowess or ferocity of *Border Down*. Still a satisfactory example of the genre, Capcom's bitmap-driven affair sat firmly in the 'twitch' camp – a more disposable, flimsy but, ultimately, available choice.



Interesting fact
G.Rev is a three-man exodus from Taito, much in the vein of Treasure's dislocation from Konami. Possibly Japan's smallest codeshop, the company continues to do exactly what it wants. Fans should watch out for the aforementioned Dreamcast shooter, *Under Defeat*. Keeping it real, then.



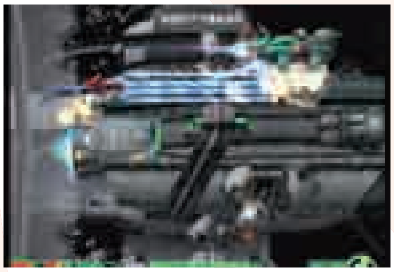
» By-the-numbers backdrops are disappointing, yet welcoming at the same time

メガ駆動機構

By early 2001, Dreamcast was dead. Sega had officially announced its withdrawal from the hardware market and that which many had feared – Sony's near-unshakable dominance of the industry – had finally happened. In Japan, however, nothing could be further from the truth: there remained a steady trickle of games that continues to this day with G.Rev's own *Under Defeat* perched imminently for release. Much like SNK's Neo Geo AES, a mixture of fanboy obsession, the traditional Japanese eschewing of Western tastes, plus genuine developer support for the underdog, gave rise to some of the finest software long after the parent company has (at least officially) given up on the platform. And where Dreamcast is concerned, 2003's *Border Down* is the premier example of such software.

Traditionally, the most lauded games – *Gradius, R-Type, Thunder Force* – have all been horizontal affairs, but the late nineties saw a shift in perspective as the likes of Raizing/Eighting, Cave and Psykio forged a trend that has been an unofficial blueprint ever since. Along with *Gradius V* and *R-Type Final*, *Border Down* is the only other blaster to puncture the vertical dominance of the genre. In itself, this is a breath of fresh air. But, fortunately, it's not the only reason to invest in the title – not by a long chalk.

First-play can be deceiving. Until the emergence of the level one mayor, there is little that truly astounds. Graphically all is as it should be, design echoing details from *Einhander* and *Philosoma*, albeit a hundred times more smoothly. But *Border Down* keeps its cards close to its chest: later levels and borders (wait a little…) unveil a rather more lavish set of vistas, ranging from



» We have *R-Type*'s superb third level to thank for the size of this particular starship



» The 'Break Laser' is a chargeable and rather almighty weapon that vaporises all in its path



» Opening levels are of little concern, difficulty-wise, re-emerging on a lower border excepted

chaotic rockfields to gargantuan spaceports. Hindsight is even kinder and, while not quite in *Last Resort* territory, there is a certain je ne sais quo that permeates the gameplay, waves of nostalgia circa-Saturn days surfacing as play progresses. Like all good shooters, digital is the only control option, three-way speed selection and rapid, inertia-led fire erecting the basic building blocks of the game.

G.Rev has greater plans, though. The 'borders' of the title form a complex navigation system that metronomes between choice and dictation, depending on player ability: each of the six stages is divided into three horizontal slices: green, yellow, red. Launching, there is a choice of which border to tackle, but falter there and the restart point dumps the ship in the border below. Visually, there is much to distinguish the layers apart, but it's superficial when measured against the real contrast: each is more hostile than the last, the difficulty ramping up significantly as the player descends through the borders. Often, the initial reaction is to claim unfairness, as if to say some horrific inversion of intentions had taken place – surely, there should be some kind of a reprieve once lives are lost? Instead, G.Rev has opted to follow Konami's one-hit-death mechanic – expire and your workload is doubled. The lesson? Refrain from dying. It's definitely not for the inept, but it's as fair as it's ever been. There is evidence of a slight mellowing, though, as taking a hit in the lowest border affords an instant restart.

As with many modern shooters, the points system is embedded deep within the game, allowing the score-obsessed an opportunity to display their somewhat mundane prowess with the joypad. A relic of the *Space Invaders* days, G.Rev has included several elements for ensuring six-figure attainments are the norm. The 'par score' is an immediate target for each level and reaching it lets the player pick the entry point for the successive border. Failure to do so results in a direct move to the start of the same border at the following stage. However – and this is where high-score hounds will take chances – points accumulated for downed enemy ships are doubled for a yellow layer and tripled for the red. Consistently surviving the harsh route through a red border will yield far greater tallies than the equivalent, easier, green relative. Yet greater rewards can be found in the boss timer function where, synchronising the despatch of a level guardian with the zero-count heaps on even more points. Naturally, bosses can be crushed more swiftly, but extending the rush time gives an opportunity to pick the enemy apart piece-by-piece, increasing the end result even further.

But this can all be considered moot. The pleasure in playing *Border Down* is in its energy and atmosphere. At first, crawling, then suddenly apparent, the experience is more ferocious than *Ikaruga*'s relaxed approach and exponentially superior to any of the 'twitch' pretenders – stablemates like the fabulous *Mars Matrix* or underwhelming *Zero Gunner 2* included. This is horizontal shooting as it was 15 years ago, as it should be: grand graphics, memorable flak and attacks patterns, gargantuan bosses and a weapons system invisible to all but the subconscious, totalling gameplay that allows the player to get on with the job of destroying everything in their path. Microsoft was so unashamedly naïve to insist G.Rev deliver *Senke No Ronde* in one-on-one form for 360, rather than port *Under Defeat* across. Until a true next-gen horizontal 2.5D blaster comes along, Border Down should remain arc-welded to DCs indefinitely.



» Bosses are typically-enormous constructions, spitting plasma and wrath in all directions

私を読み、私に書くことができ、私に知らせれば好みのゲームはある

CONVERSION CAPERS

GAUNTLET

DOMINATING ARCADE FLOORS EVERYWHERE,THE MEGALITHIC GAUNTLET COIN-OP COULD HAVE BEEN CUT FROM A MOUNTAIN SIDE: A DOORWAY INTO THE IMMEASURABLE DEPTHS OF ED LOGG'S VISION. REFASHIONING THIS DIGITAL DOLMEN INTO A HANDY-SIZED HOME CONVERSION WAS A TASK AS MAMMOTH AS SURVIVING THE CATACOMBS OF THE GAME ITSELF. RETRO GAMER SPOKE TO THOSE AUDACIOUS CHAMPIONS WHO RAN THE GAUNTLET IN 1986, AND BROUGHT BACK THE SECRETS OF ATARI'S DARKEST DUNGEON FOR ALL TO SEE

"We were absolutely determined that our conversion of *Gauntlet* would be the best, and once the game was actually released, the competition didn't stand a chance."

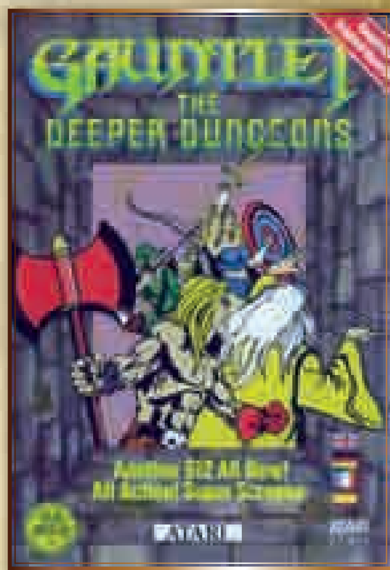
Tony Porter's claim might be a bold one, but as programmer of the Spectrum, Amstrad, MSX and Master System home versions of the arcade cult classic, the evidence of his triumph shouts a strident accord from deep within computer game history. At the time, US Gold had an encompassing agreement with Atari for home conversions, a valuable contract that was sure to pay off with a success-story like *Gauntlet*. Kevin Bulmer, graphic artist for the many conversions, told us how he and Tony were brought onboard the coveted project.

"Geoff Brown of U.S. Gold wanted us to drop a game we were working on (called *Pentacle*) and do the home conversions of his top licence, *Gauntlet*. This raised several issues, not least of these being whether the game was even possible on home machines. Since the licence was so valuable to U.S. Gold, a condition of us doing the work was to become employees of Gremlin Graphics and to work at new offices set up in Birmingham especially for this project. After much consideration and trips to visit Ian Stewart at Gremlin's offices in Sheffield,





» The old team was put back together when it came time to convert the sequel



» *The Deeper Dungeons* was a 512 level add-on of the best maps sent in by players of the original game

we all agreed and signed up." It was apparent from the outset that shoehorning a powerful game system like the *Gauntlet* coin-op into an 8-bit package would be like trying to put smoke into a milk bottle using a cricket bat. Whoever tackled this daunting assignment was going to have to dissect the game on more than just a technical level; the intricacies of what made *Gauntlet* so unequivocally playable would have to be routed from the extraordinary, yet superficial, elements that cast an impressive sheen across the gigantic, imposing cabinet. Surprisingly, Porter found a familiar friend when examining the machine, though in something of a subdued role.

"To put this into perspective, you have to realise the sheer power of the arcade machine at the side of the computers we were writing for," he continues. "Perhaps the one thing I will never forget is that the arcade machine actually had a Z80 processor it in – the same processor that drives the home computers I had to rewrite *Gauntlet* for. Amazingly, its sole purpose in the arcade machine was just to read the four joysticks and buttons!"

Coaxing what was essentially a joystick driver (handling not much more than a baker's dozen of digital inputs) into running an entire RPG was going to require some difficult decisions. Deriving generalised estimations of what makes a good game great is the foundation of a successful home conversion, and it's down to the beleaguered developer to keep the heart of a much-loved game beating inside a very different chest.



» Tiger's handheld LCD *Gauntlet* didn't hold much to the style of the original, but the name was enough to sell it



» The artwork from the original coin-op manual was revived time and again as different conversions were put on the shelves

TALK IS CHEAP, FOUR IS A CROWD

The original arcade machine couldn't 'alf natter, and although we look back now with knowing ears (belatedly saluting the Atari engineers who spoke to us vicariously through their magnificent machine) this was not a feature that had any particular influence on the dynamics of *Gauntlet*'s celebrated gameplay. In fact, many an avid dungeon dweller would admit to answering the crypt keeper with phrases influenced more by irate passion than technological awe.

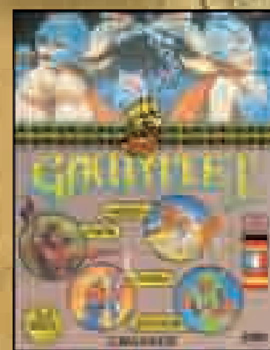
"None of the Z80 or C64 versions retained speech. I'm afraid to say that while it wasn't beyond those machines in principal, in practice it sounded awful and took up a huge amount of room - it just wasn't practical. Later the Master System and Atari ST versions were able to keep the sounds, but these were much more capable machines," remembers Porter.

The multi-player aspect of *Gauntlet* was another significant part of its allure, but the incremented thrill of four players over two was not sufficient to shunt the game into the realms of stardom it promptly achieved. These characteristics were useful for initially drawing players to the coin-op from across a busy arcade, yet both were cursory enough in nature to have little impact on its longevity. Neither could these facets be brought home, so the 8-bit

IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** US GOLD
» **DEVELOPER:** GREMLIN GRAPHICS
» **RELEASED:** 1986
» **GENRE:** RPG/MAZE

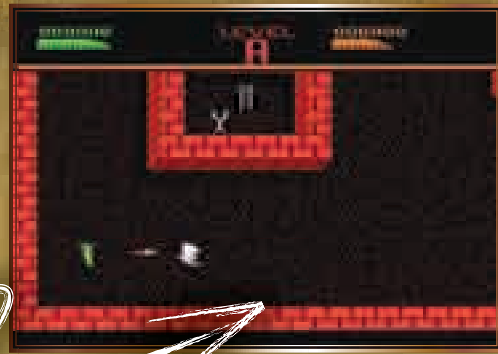




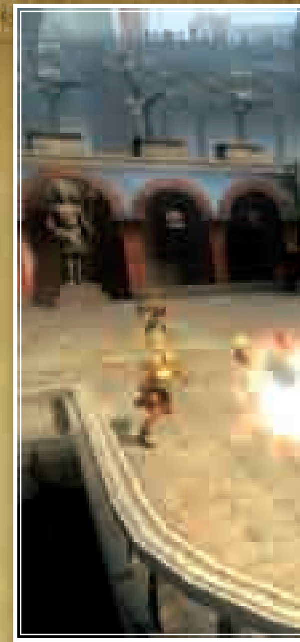
"WE WORKED OUT THE INTRICACIES OF THE GAME SIMPLY BY PLAYING IT" TONY PORTER

CONVERSION CAPERS





Gauntlet itself is a clone of a 1983 Atari 800 game called *Dandy Dungeon*, (above) written by John Palevich, who then converted it into *Dark Chambers* for the 7800 in 1988 (right)

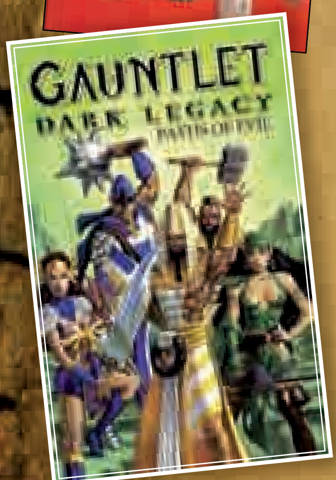


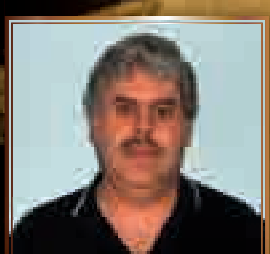
NOVEL IDEAS

The lifelong popularity of the *Gauntlet* franchise has prompted it to break out of the videogame medium and into other forms of entertainment. In 2004, Richard C. White converted the *Gauntlet* franchise into a planned series of novels, the first being *Gauntlet Dark Legacy – Book 1: Paths Of Evil*, featuring the Wizard, Valkyrie, Elf, Warrior and Knight on a mission to find the shards of the Gryphon Window and save the world from something evil (probably).

And although *Gauntlet* has caused many of us to break into rapturous song over the years, Denver born Christian ska band, Five Iron Frenzy, actually released a number entitled '*Wizard Needs Food, Badly*' on their 2003 penultimate album, The End Is Near. It was then re-released on their concluding album in 2004, with the wonderfully esoteric title, The End Is Here.







» Tony Porter: "I sum up *Gauntlet* with the phrase 'If it moves, shoot it, it if doesn't then shoot it until it does'"

"SHOEHORNING THE GAUNTLET COIN-OP INTO AN 8-BIT PACKAGE WOULD BE LIKE TRYING TO PUT SMOKE INTO A MILK BOTTLE USING A CRICKET BAT"

Gauntlet couldn't rely on the attractive veneer used by the coin-op to make sales.

"One of the hardest things we faced during the conversions was the lack of support from Atari at a coding level – we didn't get to see any source code for the arcade version until well after we had completed the conversions. We worked out the intricacies of the game simply by playing it – we had an arcade machine on free play in the office."

The key to finding the soul of one of the most successful arcade conversions is summed up in one quick, if slightly austere, sound bite from Tony Porter: they worked it out 'simply by playing it'. Had Atari supplied the black and white building blocks of the machine's composition, rather than the team spending such valuable time intimately learning about the game's qualities, then their understanding of what made *Gauntlet* remarkable might have been severely diminished.

But, as with all works of art, vision and passion can only be realised through technical application, and even though the Gremlin team may have connected with the spirit of *Gauntlet* personally, that understanding would be for nothing if it couldn't be shared with the game-playing public. Bulmer explained how he was able to accurately recreate the stylised countenance of the arcade screen.

"I was helped immensely by a utility Bill Allen wrote for the Atari ST that allowed me to work in the Degas paint package (remember that?) and then convert the graphics down to the colour and pixel resolution of the individual machines. The utility was named Keating after Tom Keating, the famous painting forger who was in the news at the time. I had control over everything and could make sure that each version was the best it could be."

ON THE LEVEL

Gauntlet was not only huge in terms of its arcade grandfather's colossal footprint, but was also infused with a scope of gameplay that went right up to the boundaries of comprehension then leaned out over the edge. Not only were there incalculable numbers of enemy characters on each sprawling stage, but the dungeons themselves delved over 500 cavernous levels into the virtual earth of Atari's masterpiece. How was Tony able to recreate this distinctive, non-linear journey through the vast catacombs?

"We had to contend with the sheer size of the arcade game in terms of levels, and the fact that the game would randomly choose which level you would play (once above level seven). For the tape-based versions of the game, where random loading of levels was impossible, we had to come up with a system to get as close to selecting random levels as possible. In the end we loaded up a larger block of levels and then chose which ones to play, so the order, whilst not truly random, was almost always different each time you played."

Guilty of that most heinous of 8-bit sins – the multi-load – cassette-based conversions of *Gauntlet* must receive recognition for employing one of the least intrusive segmented loading methods ever seen. With such a concentrated onslaught of rabid gameplay, the half-minute breaks were sometimes a welcome opportunity to stretch cramped fingers and twisted knuckles, and were short enough to sustain the game's momentum. A fair trade for ensuring the magnitude of the original game was not lost due to technological restrictions. Bulmer explained the dexterous techniques used to keep *Gauntlet* true to its mighty lineage.

"Tony spearheaded a drive to keep loading times to an absolute minimum once the game had started. We needed to hold in memory the entire map and details of any changes to it (opened doors, crumbling walls, etc) and all of the graphics. The key to it was a unique system Tony invented to store the maps in a compressed form. It was very elegant and simple but allowed us to keep all of the detail from all of the maps in a fraction of the memory the arcade machine used."

QUANTITY AND QUALITY

The protagonist's individual characteristics worked brilliantly to immerse gamers in the world of *Gauntlet*, but the nature of the enemy was where it broke all conventions. More akin to the zombie hordes of *Day Of The Dead* than the *Dungeons & Dragons* RPGs that inspired the game, the swarms of enemies clawed and clamoured at walls and doors in a desperate attempt to attack the player, rushing



» The original arcade hit in all its glory. It heralded a new beginning for co-operative play and spawned countless sequels





» The latest incarnation, *Gauntlet: Seven Sorrows*, has met with harsh reviews, but certainly looks the part

blindly onto their weapons without care when the opportunity inevitably arose to attack. This essential 'horror survival' behaviour, coupled with the sheer quantity of aggressors, was yet another potential stumbling block for *Gauntlet*'s conversion team, but far too important a facet to neglect.

"The levels were not actually too much of a problem, apart from the sheer time needed to design them on our editors and the problems with loading from tape. The volume of sprites certainly was an issue, but we eventually resolved it by making the monsters up out of characters (they are actually drawn the same way as the level walls) – thus they are not truly 'sprites' but they did move around, turn and act the same as their sprite counterparts from the arcade, and by taking this approach we could keep the essential game speed up," continues Porter. Bulmer also had to relearn what he knew about memory management to realise the monstrous armies populating every level of *Gauntlet*'s cavernous mausoleum.

"*Gauntlet* required lots of animation. We allowed each enemy to run in all eight directions but limited their animation frames to four directions. The heroes had lots more animation. There were also all of the sound effects to cram in. I don't think there was anything else we could have done or fitted into the memory of those machines."

The principal features that made *Gauntlet* such a remarkable game were few and simple, yet digging them out from beneath a mountain of hard gloss and dazzling glamour, and distilling their vital essences into an intoxicating 8-bit brew takes a certain kind of skill. Tony, Porter and the rest of the dedicated crew at Gremlin Graphics, who made it their passion to free the game from the arcade dungeons and deliver it to the home warriors, indisputably contributed much to the legendary reputation *Gauntlet* enjoys today.

"I am still proud of all the versions of *Gauntlet* that we did," continues Porter, "but perhaps the best thing was after we finally got our hands on the source code of the original and we realised just how many of the 'hidden' aspects of the game (such as how to control which teleport you go to and which exit you come out of, and how 'Death' worked) we got right without ever seeing the code. Bob (Armour), Bill (Allen), Kevin and myself sat down and looked through it, and it was amazing to see the same logic sequences we had worked out the hard way, written down in Atari's source code!"





» Fans of the franchise should definitely check out *Dark Legacy* on the PS2 and Xbox – the bloodline of the original remains healthy in this game



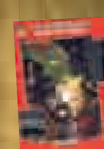
OTHER GAMES IN THE SERIES:
Gauntlet: The Deeper Dungeons
Gauntlet II
Gauntlet: The Third Encounter
Gauntlet III: The Final Quest
Gauntlet IV
Gauntlet Legends
Gauntlet: Dark Legacy
Gauntlet: Seven Sorrows

THE DUNGEON MASTER
After the success of Gremlin Graphics/US Gold's home versions, Tony was brought back to the dungeons when it was time to make a *Gauntlet* conversion for Sega's Master System.

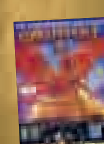
"Later on I revisited the *Gauntlet* arena whilst heading up US Gold's Sega department and wrote the Master System version of the game. To aid me in this I spent a week out in Japan at Sega's HQ to learn about the intricacies of the Master System console. This became my best version of *Gauntlet* – especially as the technical bods at Sega had told me that doing the static side panel with a full 8-way smooth scrolling game was impossible. Boy did I love the look on their faces when I demonstrated it working!"



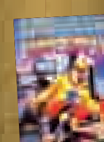
DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS



THE EIDOLON
SYSTEMS: AMSTRAD CPC, APPLE II, ATARI 8-BIT, C64, MSX, SPECTRUM
YEAR: 1986



GAUNTLET II
SYSTEMS: AMIGA, AMSTRAD CPC, ATARI ST, C64, DOS, NES, GAME BOY, SPECTRUM
YEAR: 1988



SKATE CRAZY
SYSTEMS: AMSTRAD CPC, C64, SPECTRUM
YEAR: 1988

"THE DUNGEONS THEMSELVES DELVED OVER 500 CAVERNOUS LEVELS INTO THE VIRTUAL EARTH OF ATARI'S MASTERPIECE"



THE GAUNTLET CONVERSIONS

When Ed Logg's *Gauntlet* was released onto an unsuspecting public in 1985, it brought co-operative play to a whole new level. The ability to play with or against three other players was previously unheard of and gave *Gauntlet* a vitality that was missing from many other similar games, and 21 years later - thanks to new titles like Gauntlet: Seven Sorrows - gamers are still enjoying it.

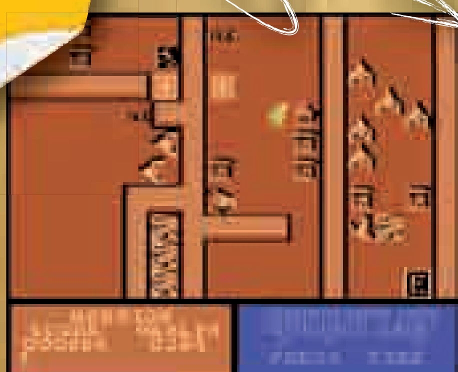
One of Gauntlet's most interesting aspects was that competition would often surface long before a game had actually begun. Find an unmanned machine for example and the first obstacle you'd often face was trying to get past your mates as you all tried to play the Valkyrie (interestingly, the Elf is considered the best balanced character). Of course, once the game started things didn't necessarily get any easier. While keeping yourself and your friends alive was a pressing priority, everything would fall apart with the introduction of *Gauntlet*'s treasure chests, potions and food. A sensible party would gauge the health/wealth of the overall group and assess the situation accordingly, but where was the fun in that? As a result *Gauntlet* would often result in a mad scramble for the dungeon's valuable assets that very often spilt out into the real world.

What made *Gauntlet* such a joy to play though was that when the tantrums had stopped and all the toys were finally back in the pram the game became even more rewarding. Lone Wolfs desperate for glory would soon realise that only an unlimited amount of credits would get them to the deeper levels, so unless you were a millionaire, your best bet was to actually team up with your friends and leave the bickering for another day.

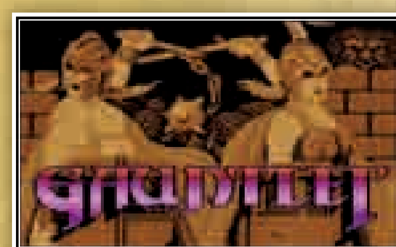
Gauntlet was a benchmark in co-operative gameplay, and even today it still manages to delight and frustrate in equal measures. Little wonder then that it was recently made available on the 360's Xbox Live Arcade Service for a whole new generation.

HOME CONVERSIONS

The original arcade version of *Gauntlet* appeared on a variety of machines that ranged from the humble Tandy to Atari's 16-bit ST. While *Gauntlet* has appeared on countless compilations ranging from the PlayStation to Microsoft's 360 we're more concerned with covering the original 8 and 16-bit variations.



ATARI-XL



The Atari 8-bit impresses with its deft use of colour. Not so much a glorious work of Technicolor, pixelised impressionism, so much as a comprehensible use of easy viewing tones that avoid kicking you in the back of the retina. Sadly, with such a busy screen, it's easy to lose track of which rampaging horde is massacring you at which particular moment, yet this version manages to keep a clear colour scheme for each level that doesn't interfere with the action too much. That said the action is considerable less packed than *Gauntlet* requires, making it more of a maze game than an actual fighter. What a shame that the clunky controls make it such a bitch to play…



SINCLAIR SPECTRUM



We'll forgive the tinny speech, lack of in-game music (something all the 8-bit computer versions suffered from) and dull colour scheme, as this is a pretty solid conversion that should make all Spectrum owners proud.

Granted, it's no R-Type, but a surprising amount of detail has been crammed into Sir Clive's humble machine. There's always a huge amount of enemies on screen and the all-important gameplay runs along at a fair old pace. It can sometimes be a little difficult to spot yourself when the screen gets too crowded, but to be fair, this is also a problem with many of the other conversions. A good solid effort that's worth a play.



COMMODORE 64

Yes it scrolls smoothly, and yes, it sounds very nice, but for some reason, we were never that impressed with the Commodore 64 outing. Maybe it was the controls, as for some reason they never seemed quite as responsive as some of the other 8-bit versions that were available (although to be fair they were a damn site better than the god-awful XL's).

Visually, everything was a little on the chunky side, which gave the game a somewhat squashed appearance, and as a result, *Gauntlet* on the C64 comes across as an ugly girlfriend. You're more than happy to jump her in privacy, but wouldn't want to show her off in front of your mates.





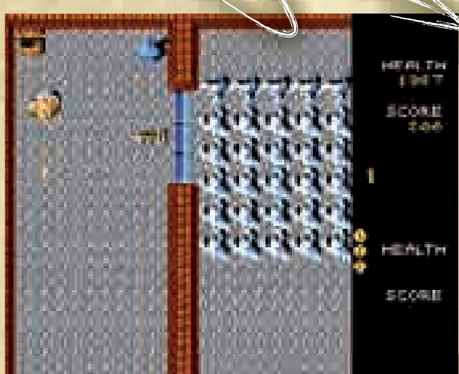
AMSTRAD CPC

Porter and Bulmer claim that the CPC version of *Gauntlet* is the best out of all the 8-bit variations and who are we to argue?

Gauntlet on the Amstrad may not be able to reach the same glorious heights that the Master System and Atari ST ports achieved, but what's on offer is of a very high standard, especially when you consider the limitations of the machine.

The most notable difference is how damn nice everything looks, rather than suffering from the usual Speccy port, lucky CPC owners were treated to the sort of vibrancy that wouldn't look out of place in Kew Gardens.

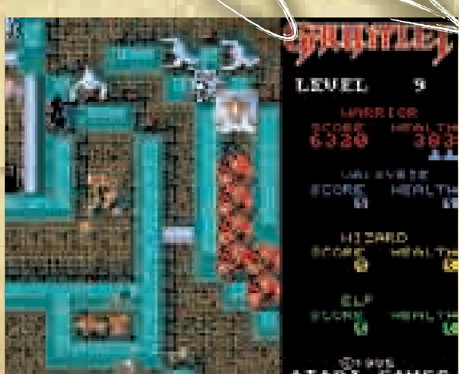




MASTER SYSTEM

Now this is very impressive. Granted the game was made a good few years after the other versions, but this is a fantastic conversion that did the Master System proud. There's plenty of speech, the game plays true to the arcade original and everything looks simply wonderful. Perhaps the most impressive aspect of the Master System game though is how fast the thing moves. Regardless of which character you use, the whole game nips along at an incredibly frantic pace and still manages to impress. It may have only been a two-player game but *Gauntlet* remains one of the Master System's greatest conversions.





ATARI ST

Despite being advertised in various magazines we've never actually seen an Amiga version of *Gauntlet*, so Atari's ST manages to steal all the 16-bit glory by default. Comparing the superior ST version to its 8-bit peers is like shooting fish in a barrel though, so we'll just point out that *Gauntlet* on the ST is probably the most faithful port of *Gauntlet* we've ever played on a home machine. Sure, later systems such as the PlayStation and Xbox feature near perfect ports of the arcade original game, but they're not exactly pushing the host hardware and thus don't count. For its time, if you wanted to emulate the experience of playing *Gauntlet* outside of an actual arcade this was the version to go for. Hell, it even had four-player support. Utterly essential.



OTHER VERSIONS TO CONSIDER

APPLE II, MSX II, PC MS-DOS, TANDY COLOUR COMPUTER, PLAYSTATION (1998) ARCADE'S GREATEST HITS VOLUME 2, DREAMCAST (2000) MIDWAY'S GREATEST ARCADE HITS VOLUME 2, XBOX (2003) MIDWAY ARCADE TREASURES, GAMECUBE (2003) MIDWAY ARCADE TREASURES, PLAYSTATION2 (2003) MIDWAY ARCADE TREASURES, PSP (2006) MIDWAY ARCADE TREASURES EXTENDED PLAY, XBOX 360 (2005) GAUNTLET HD, GAME BOY ADVANCE (2005) GAUNTLET/RAMPART, PC WINDOWS (1998) ARCADE'S GREATEST HITS – THE ATARI COLLECTION 2, PC WINDOWS (2004) MIDWAY ARCADE TREASURES

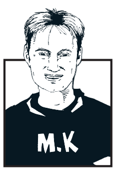
SUPER MARIO WORLD

HAIL TO THE PLUMBER





- » **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO
- » **RELEASED:** 1992
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORMER
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** SNES
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5+



HISTORY

Super Mario World is one of the finest videogames ever created. It's just fact. Characters, structure, level design, humour, the perfect learning curve… all flawless. As anyone who has reached the Holy Grail of 96 exits will tell you, you'd be hard pressed to find a better platform game anywhere, be it from Nintendo's back catalogue or not.

The story is your usual *Mario* hokum – something to do with missing eggs, a captured Princess and Bowser in a big teacup, but that's not the point. From the absolute get go, *Super Mario World* is a constant learning experience. Every time you think you've mastered all it has to give, it throws something new at you and opens up countless more play possibilities.

The first of these, and by far the most memorable, is the introduction of a now very famous character into the *Mario* universe – the loveable green Dinosaur known as Yoshi. As soon as that tongue popped out of his smiley mouth, accompanied by what can only be described as 'the greatest noise of all time', we knew Yoshi was big news. Turns out we were right, he's still going strong today and is now almost as recognisable as the moustachioed one himself.

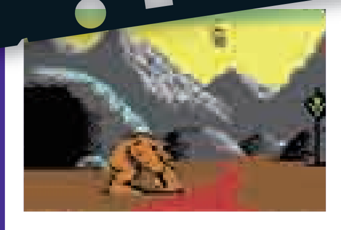
Along with the little green chap, we were treated to flight via a feather power-up, a natty new spin jump that could destroy blocks beneath you and a host of secrets and extras that kept SNES owners scratching their heads for months. And goombas with parachutes. Never forget them.

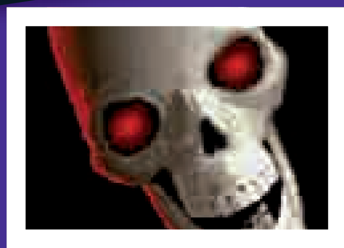
My one residing memory of this Miyamoto classic has to be one of the very earliest levels. Set high up in the sky, with shifting and swinging platforms, a constantly scrolling screen and crazy music that sits somewhere between the mushroom kingdom and deliverance. The trick was to hold right on the pad and time your jumps so you could do the whole thing without stopping once. Satisfaction guaranteed.



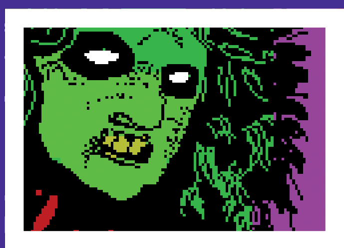
COMPANY PROFILE

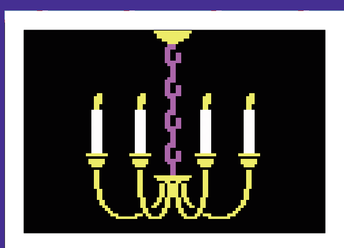
PALACE SOFTWARE



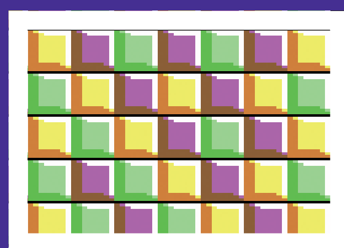






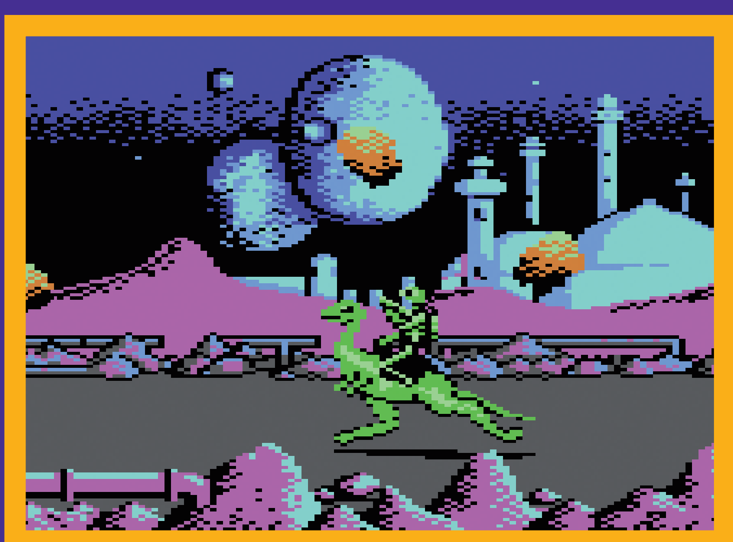


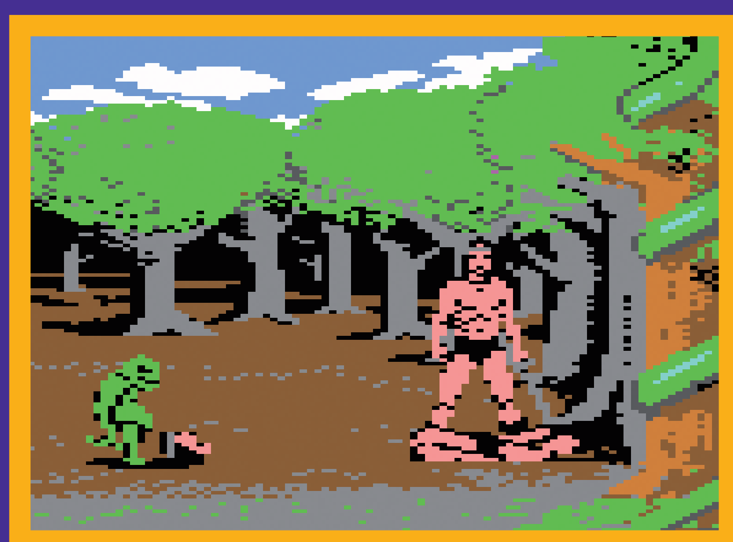




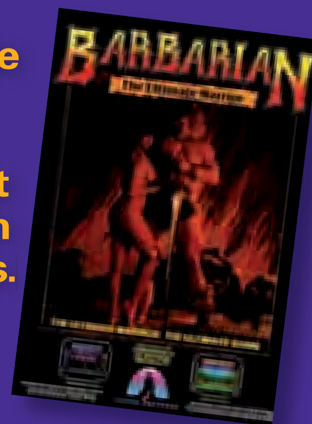


BARBARIANS, SACRED ARMOUR AND THE EVIL DEAD – WELCOME TO PALACE SOFTWARE…





Mention Palace Software and most people think of Barbarian, and the controversial marketing campaign featuring glamour model Maria Whittaker in a tiny bikini. But behind the headlines was a company with a small but significant catalogue of games. Martyn Carroll talks to the founders to find out exactly what went on.



» "Ban this sick filth!" screamed self-appointed moral guardians when the *Barbarian* advert first appeared in print

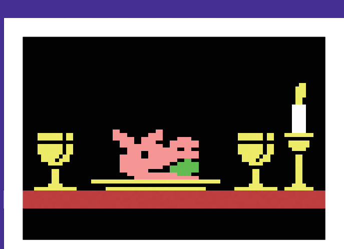
You could say that Peter Stone and Richard Leinfellner have done alright for themselves. Since the pair formed Palace Software in 1983, they've both carved out successful careers in the UK games industry. Stone is currently General Manager of Konami UK, no less, while Leinfellner is a Vice President and Executive Producer at Electronic Arts. It's all very impressive, even more so when you discover that they stumbled across the wonderful world of gaming almost by chance.

In the early Eighties Peter was involved in the booming home video market. He left London's Virgin Megastore to become manager of The Video Palace, a popular video shop on Kensington High Street owned by the Palace group. Richard worked there as a sales assistant to help pay his way through university. As a sideline The Video Palace began to sell computer games, both in the store and via mail order. Richard helped by reviewing the new games for their sales catalogue. And then something very interesting happened.

"Kids started to come into the store with programs they'd made and wanted to sell them," says Stone. "They'd record them on blank cassettes or disks with their own handwritten labels, and we'd buy them."

It wasn't just kids either. Leinfellner remembers that Jeff Minter's mum used to stop by and drop off boxes of her son's games, presumably while he was back home in Hampshire putting the finishing touches to his latest llama-themed epic.

"As the months went on," continues Stone, "we started to make contact with companies who were producing games professionally and the business started to build up. Richard and I had the idea of actually making games ourselves, and that's when the idea for Palace Software was born."



A NASTY PLAN

Peter went to Palace boss Nik Powell with the plan and he was happy to fund the venture. As a subsidiary of the Palace group, Nik would have a say in everything, but being part of the group had its benefits. For a start, Palace had an off-site tape archive room at London's Scala Cinema which Peter and Richard were allowed to use as an office for free. More importantly, Palace Home Video owned the rental rights to a certain low-budget horror film that was all over the headlines.

The release of *The Evil Dead* movie would have probably passed without note were it not for the introduction of the Video Recordings Act in 1984. The Act stated that all videos made available in the UK must be classified by the Government before they could be legally distributed. However, a number of horror movies were deemed too extreme to receive the new '18' rating and they were effectively banned. And topping the list of so-called 'video nasties' was *The Evil Dead.*

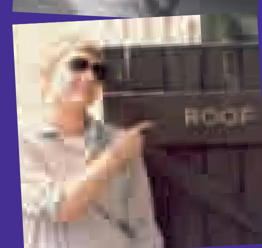
The furore that followed played straight into Palace's hands. The film may have been banned, but the Act specifically stated that computer games were exempt from classification. Palace obtained the videogame rights to the film and Richard and Peter began to bang out the game for the Commodore 64 (with Spectrum and BBC Micro ports to follow). Meanwhile, *The Evil Dead* hysteria showed no signs of dying down.

"One day we were raided by the Obscene Publications Squad to confiscate *The Evil Dead* video masters!" laughs Leinfellner. "We had to convince them we had nothing to do with the tape archive, even though I was writing *The Evil Dead* game at the time."

Home Office hassles were the least of their worries however, as the pair struggled to manage the project. "The game was my first programming effort and it was very poor," admits Leinfellner. "Pete did all the graphics, even entering the code in hex. We didn't even have the game to show at the lavish launch party at the London Dungeon because I was running late." And *The Evil Dead* curse was to strike yet again. "On the way from delivering the game master to the duplicators I was knocked off my motor bike and broke my wrist," he winces.

"We were totally naive," adds Stone. "It was almost like an experiment where we were finding out how not to make a game. We pretty much made every possible mistake,





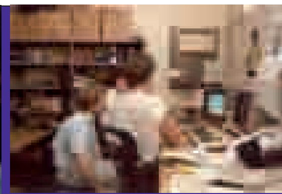
» **Top:** Palace co-founder Peter Stone. "That big moustache I had in those days was my trademark in the industry!" he laughs **Bottom:** Palace's other main man, Richard Leinfellner. Richard started out as a programmer before taking on more responsibility as a producer

IN THE KNOW

In brief: Palace Software was formed in 1983 by Peter Stone and Richard Leinfellner while they were working together in a London video shop. The company's debut was a low-key release based on Sam Raimi's horror film *The Evil Dead*, but Palace achieved notable success with the *Cauldron* and *Barbarian* games. Palace went on to publish a number of titles for other developers, including Sensible Software and Delphine, before being absorbed into Titus Software in 1991.

PALACE SOFTWARE







» **Clockwise:** Collecting an award from French magazine Tilt: Peter Stone, Matthew Timms, Steve Brown and Stanley Schembri. » It's not all work, work, work… Peter and the Palace staff enjoying a game of *Exploding Fist*. » Mike, Steve and Maria fooling around on the *Barbarian 2* photo shoot

"BARBARIAN IS BEST REMEMBERED FOR ITS VIOLENT SWORDPLAY AND SUN 'STUNNA' MARIA WHITTAKER"

PUBLISHING PALACE

Towards the end of the Eighties, Palace's focus shifted more towards the publishing side of the software business. According to Leinfellner, this made perfect sense as the company had already established strong sales and distribution channels throughout the UK and Europe. "We decided to use the facilities we'd built up to help cover our overheads. We started to talk to other developers and proposed to them that we'd sell their games. We were already working with outside developers such as The RamJam Corporation and Binary Vision and we thought we'd wrap all such future projects under a new brand – Outlaw Productions."

The first release published on the new label was Sensible Software's *Shoot-'Em-Up Construction Kit* for the Commodore 64. This game-making utility sold very well and opened the gates for more titles to be released on the Outlaw label, including *Troll*, *Cosmic Pirate* and *International 3D Tennis*. In 1989 Palace published *Bio Challenge* and *Future Wars*, both by Delphine, on the Atari ST and Amiga in Europe.

but we were learning from those mistakes. By doing it we could then see the direction we should be going in. We realised that we needed to get some good artists on board and put more effort into the design of the game."

SEASON OF THE WITCH

Following the release of *The Evil Dead*, Palace Software hired Steve Brown and Stanley Schembri. Steve was an artist and designer while Stanley was a programmer employed to assist Richard on coding duties. With the new staff in place, they began work on their next release.

Palace had acquired the rights to the *Halloween* films, so Steve Brown's first job was to design a tie-in game. "I worked on concepts and designs," he says, "but a tiny eight-pixel high Michael Myers trundling around the screen with a kitchen knife just didn't make much of a game. However, the pumpkins I'd drawn looked really cool and gave me the idea to take the game in a completely different direction."

With the fantasy theme in place, Steve and Richard began to discuss how the game would play. "We were having a chat," says Leinfellner, and Steve asked me 'How come games are either scrolling or platform?' I told him there was really no technical reason so I wrote an engine which did both."

The game was christened *Cauldron* and saw you playing as the Witch Queen, flying over a scrolling landscape on your broomstick before descending into the various flip-screen tombs beneath the ground. Released in early 1985, *Cauldron* was an instant hit on the Commodore 64. It was reviewed in the first issue of Zzap!64 magazine and received 87% and a Sizzler award, beginning Palace's excellent relationship with the gaming press. Spectrum and Amstrad versions of *Cauldron* followed as well as a sequel the following year subtitled *The Pumpkin Strikes Back*.

By this point, most of the coding was done by Stanley. "I had to give up programming as the team grew," says Leinfellner. "Stan did the bulk of the coding later on. I still helped debug stuff and did things like AI design, but it's fair to say that I was more of a producer after *Cauldron*."

The company ended 1986 on a high with the release of *The Sacred Armour Of Antiriad*, a colourful platform adventure which benefited greatly from the artwork of new recruit Dan Malone (Dan was hired to take some of the pressure off Steve). Steve, meanwhile, was busy designing what would become Palace's most successful game ever.

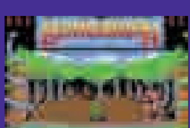
CLONIN' THE BARBARIAN

Following the success of the *Cauldron* games, Brown was given a free reign to start working on pretty much any game he wanted. "Being a big fan of Frank Frazetta's paintings, I wanted to do a sword fighting game and make it as brutal and as realistic as possible," he says. "I built a couple of wooden swords and practiced the 16 moves that I had in mind, then filmed the results and used the video as reference for the game. The spinning propeller move – which I borrowed from *Conan The Destroyer* – took forever to figure out and nearly took my eye out…"

Titled simply *Barbarian*, this one-on-one fighter featured large character graphics and surprisingly deep combat for the time, but its best remembered for its violent swordplay (the infamous 'head chop' move in particular) and its publicity campaign featuring Sun 'stunna' Maria Whittaker. Back when gaming was still largely perceived as a child's pastime, this harmless bit of titillation was seen as tasteless in some quarters. In a letter to Electron User magazine, which ran the advert on its back cover, the secretary of the West Midlands Assemblies of God Churches said the image was "offensive and particularly insulting to women". Another reader called it an "ugly pornographic advertisement".

"Getting Maria Whittaker involved was very much Steve's idea," reveals Leinfellner, "and it was a great idea. It did wonders for sales and PR. The controversy it caused was all a bit hypocritical really as it was much tamer then Page 3."

"I thought the majority of game artwork at that time was pretty poor," says Brown. "It occurred to me that creating some iconic



FINEST HOUR

BARBARIAN

Palace's most popular game needs little introduction. It graced just about every home computer format of the day received rave receives from the gaming press, and stirred up a whole heap of sales-boosting scandal. But at heart *Barbarian* was a fantastic fighting game. Our only regret is that the little pot-bellied goblin who booted your severed head off the screen didn't get to star in his own game.

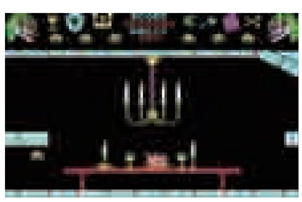
GAMES REVIEWS



CAULDRON

PALACE SOFTWARE (1985)

» With brilliantly colourful graphics courtesy of Steve Brown and gameplay that effectively mixed arcade action with adventure, *Cauldron* is up there with the best of Ultimate's 2D games. It was very hard, however, and anyone who successfully managed to collect all the required items and defeat the evil Pumpkin without cheating was a god amongst gamers. The C64 version was the best. **92%**



CAULDRON II

PALACE SOFTWARE (1986)

» The sequel took the winning formula and turned it on its head. Playing as the Pumpkin guardian from the first game, you had to bounce your bonce around the Witch Queen's castle, collecting various items. The emphasis was on exploration, as the castle was huge, but the clumsy control system and uncompromising difficulty level quickly led to frustration. The title screen music was excellent, however. **82%**



SACRED ARMOUR OF ANTIRIAD

PALACE SORFTWARE (1986)

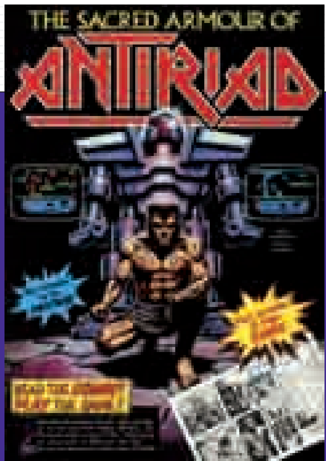
» By this point Palace has gained a reputation for developing great looking games with superb animation, and *Antiriad* continued this fine tradition. Thankfully, the game was a damn sight easier than the *Cauldron* titles, so mere mortals had a chance of actually finding the special suit of the title and destroying the alien threat. Rather laughably, the game was released in the US by Epyx as *Rad Warrior*. **89%**



STIFFLIP AND CO.

BINARY VISION (1987)

» Following its arcade adventure games this was a complete change of pace for Palace. Written by Binary Vision, *Stifflip* was an icon-driven escapade that mashed together adventure elements, arcade interludes and a bizarre plot involving mad professors, a dastardly count and some kind of depraved ray gun which threatened to undermine moral standards and lead to the collapse of the post-WW1 British Empire. **68%**



» Antiriad came with a free 16-page scene-setting comic written and drawn by Dan Malone



» Steve Brown actually sculpted models of the Witch Queen on which to base his cover art paintings

fantasy imagery with real people would be a great hook for the publicity campaign." As you'd perhaps imagine, Steve has some fond memories of the actual shoot. "The chain of Maria's bikini snapped a number of times during the photo shoot in true *Carry On* fashion and I spent a lot of time running back and forth with pliers, squeezing the links back together." Well it's a dirty job…

1988 was a pivotal year for Palace. While *Barbarian* had been a hit, in-house development continued at a steady pace with the release of *Barbarian II* and *Rimrunner*. In a bid to expand beyond the core development team, the company began to ramp up its role as a publisher of other developers' titles. Over the next three years, Palace published games from Sensible Software, Denton Designs, Delphine and others. But this expansion created problems of its own. "As the company really grew, we made some bad hiring and game publishing choices to support the growth," says Leinfellner. "I felt that it lost something that we had in the early days. I spent all my days in meetings and nothing ever seemed to get done. I think as we spread our focus the quality of the output suffered."

Richard became despondent and left to set up his own software company, IDS. In hindsight, his decision to move on seemed to be the right one, as in 1991 the Palace Group decided to sell off several of its subsidiaries including Palace Software.

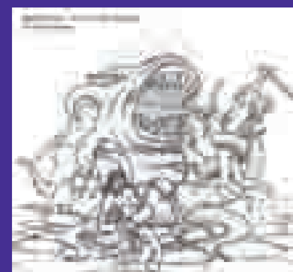
"The Palace group was getting more and more into movie production and that involved big money," explains Leinfellner, "so it decided to sell off various companies in the group. We were sold to the French company Titus and Palace Software effectively became the UK office of Titus. Some of the Palace staff left while others stayed on at Titus. Several games were in development at the time of the takeover but all of those were scrapped and never saw the light of day."

RETROSPECTION

Stone stayed on at Titus for 12 months before leaving to join Konami in 1992. Looking back at his time at Palace, we wondered if he had any personal regrets? "We should have spent a lot more effort in building up a team," he says on reflection. "We had the core of a very talented team, and for the time we made some great games. But had we taken the time to build up a bigger team I think we could have been a very successful company." When asked the same question, Leinfellner singles out the company's reluctance to support consoles. "I wished that Steve Brown and I had spent more time convincing the backers to put *Cauldron* and *Barbarian* on to Nintendo's SNES. These games were perfect for the platform and the market. I think it would have transformed Palace's declining fortunes."

Leinfellner reveals that Palace actually attempted to license some games to the Nintendo consoles. "We didn't really have enough understanding of the Japanese and American markets", he concedes. "Maybe if we'd managed to get those games released things could have been very different."

BARBARIAN III



» Beefy male model? Check. Busty female model? Check. Horrible slime creature? Check. This concept cover art for *Barbarian III* was ticking all the right boxes

Barbarian was such a huge hit, particularly in Europe, that Palace planned a string of sequels. Even before *Barbarian II* was released, Your Sinclair magazine ran a competition in which readers were invited to send in drawings of ghastly horrible monsters, with the winner getting their monster featured in *Barbarian III*. Over the next two years the game was mentioned in various magazines but no finished product ever emerged.

So what happened to *Barbarian*'s third outing? "The basic concept and design was done and it was shaping up to be fantastic," reveals Brown. "It was to feature huge figures, monsters, grisly deaths, great gags, full-on sword combat…"

Unfortunately before the game could be fully released Palace was sold to Titus and the sequel was canned. This was a shame, as Steve had some spicy publicity already planned out. "I had arranged to have a 15-foot section of tentacle made at Pinewood studios. My other favourite buxom page three model, Debee Ashby, was going to be lifted in the air by a disgusting tentacle monster as Barb hacked away with his axe…"

"THIS HARMLESS BIT OF TITILATION WAS SEEN AS TASTELESS IN SOME QUARTERS"



BARBARIAN II

PALACE SORFTWARE (1988)

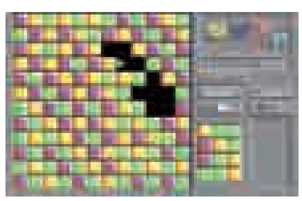
» Another memorable Maria Whittaker advertising campaign masked a hugely disappointing sequel. In following the *Fist 2* route and introducing adventure elements, *Barbarian II* messed up almost everything that was great about the first game. Choosing to play as either Barbarian or Princess Mariana, you traipsed around maze-like locations defeating weird monsters on your quest to defeat the evil Drax. **57%**



RIMRUNNER

PALACE SOFTWARE (1988)

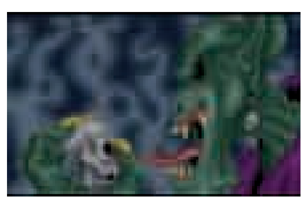
» Palace repaid faithful C64 fans with this exclusive title for the old beige breadbin – although a Spectrum version was planned but never released. Perhaps the poor Speccy just wasn't up to the job, because the game was a graphical showcase, exhibiting silky-smooth animation and parallax scrolling. Sadly there was little substance to match this style. Technically impressive but as hollow as hell. **71%**



SWAP

MICROIDS (1991)

» The success of *Tetris*, particularly on the Game Boy, saw developers rushing to make puzzle games. *Swap* was one of the better examples in that it was easy to get into but difficult to put down. The player was presented with a board of coloured shapes and you had to swap the shapes around so that the colours matched up and they disappeared from play. Intelligent, absorbing, and a world away from Palace's earlier games. **84%**

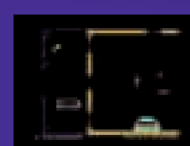


DEMONIAK

PALACE SOFTWARE (1991)

» One of Palace's last releases skipped 8-bit machines, appearing on Amiga, ST and PC. Written by Alan Grant, whose name had graced a number of comic books, Demoniak tried to thrust the text adventure genre into the Nineties with the Pure Fiction system. This allowed the game to jump the linear rails on which text adventures traditionally ran, providing the player with unprecedented levels of freedom. **75%**





AVOID LIKE THE PLAGUE

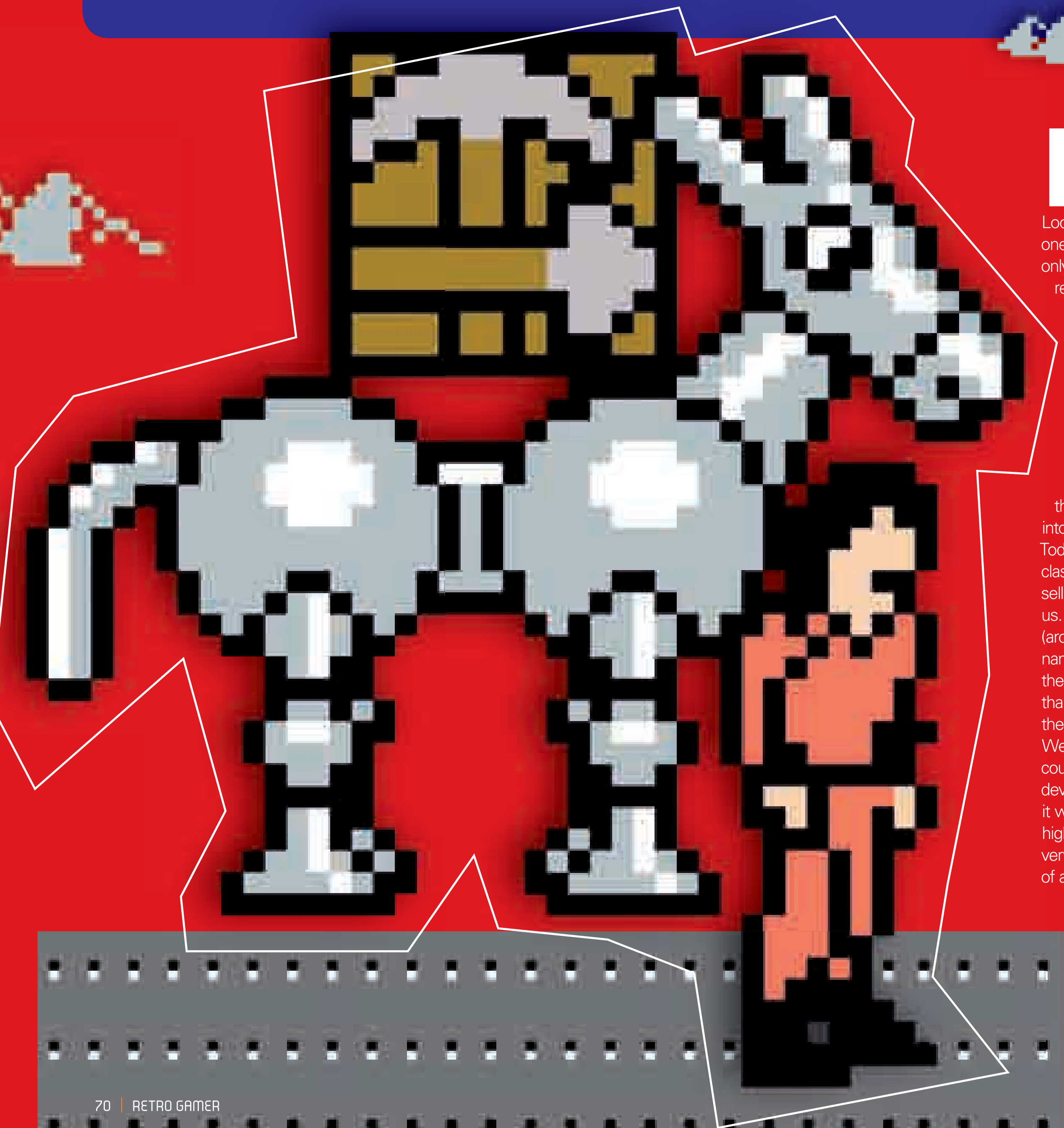
THE EVIL DEAD

Palace's first game is far from its finest hour. The simple graphics, blip-blip sound and repetitive gameplay are all fairly indicative of the time, so it does at least possess (no pun intended) a certain charm. Playing as Ash, Bruce Campbell's character from the film, you had to run around the cabin constantly shutting the doors and windows in a bid to keep the curse out. Unlike the film, it was neither gory nor fun.

THE MAKING OF...

MULE

The dictionary defines a mule as the commonly sterile offspring of a donkey and a horse. In 1983 Electronic Arts defined M.U.L.E. as a "Multiple Use Labour Element". While John Szczepaniak simply believes M.U.L.E. is a damn fine game that everyone must play. This is a look at the game with contributions from those behind Ozark's aforementioned masterpiece.



For some there is a sliding scale of quality with retro games; the further back the more spread out the timeless classics become. Looking purely at the home market in 1983, one might have difficulty finding a game not only fondly remembered but also one that still remains supremely playable today. Despite being more than 20 years old, *M.U.L.E.* was conceived flawlessly, and apart from its visual minimalism can still stand up to modern titles. In fact the multi-player ethos it championed decades ago has now become a focus for all hardware manufacturers. It is also disturbingly addictive.

Unsurprisingly it received acclaim at the time from critics and was inducted into Computer Gaming World's Hall of Fame. Today it remains a (mostly forgotten) cult classic, yet despite the accolades it did not sell well, as Senior Director Trip Hawkins tells us. "Commercially, *M.U.L.E.* bombed. It sold (around) 20,000 copies. The album cover and name were confusing and failed to explain the beauty of the game. It won more awards than any other EA game, including Game of the Year in Japan! But hardly anyone bought it. We were all very disappointed that the public couldn't fathom *M.U.L.E.*, because all of the developers and employees and critics thought it was the cat's meow." This combination of high quality and industry praise, coupled with very low sales, likely led to the slow building of a fan community over the years and its

"DESPITE BEING MORE THAN 20 YEARS OLD, M.U.L.E. WAS CONCEIVED FLAWLESSLY, AND APART FROM ITS VISUAL MINIMALISM CAN STILL STAND UP TO MODERN TITLES"

status as a "cult classic". The "album cover" he refers to is the Atari 800 version, which was later, converted to the Commodore 64, and then later still, the NES.

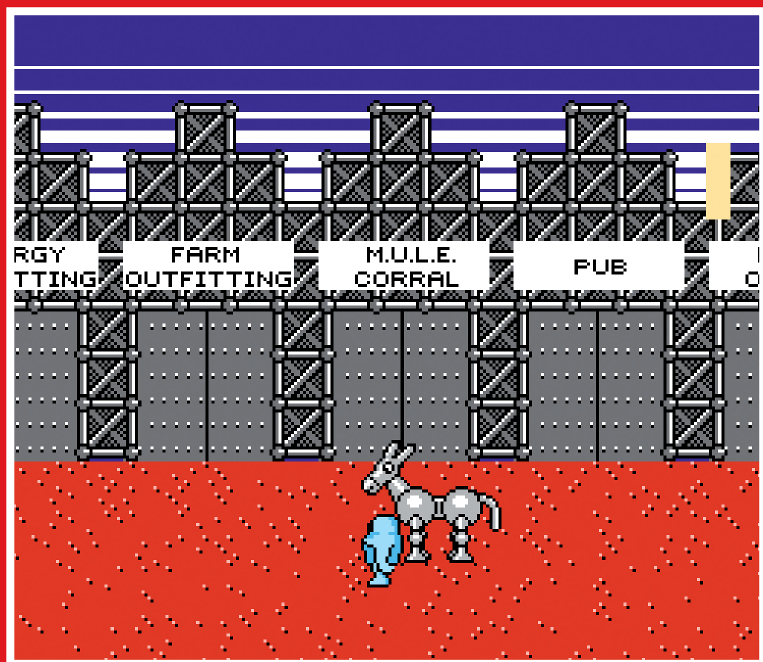
M.U.L.E. isn't easy to classify or explain, which was a reason for its lack of commercial success. At its most basic *M.U.L.E.* is a four-player, sci-fi themed, real-estate based, resource-managing, strategy (ish) trading game, with gambling, auctioning and an old fashioned Wampus.

Each session consists of 12 rounds divided into 3 phases. Firstly an initial land grab where the fastest fingers (or those in last place) get the best areas, one for each player per turn out of 45 available plots. Occasionally additional land is auctioned to the highest bidder. In phase two, each player has a limited time to perform various actions, like buying M.U.L.E.s, fitting them with equipment for one of four tasks, then placing them in vacant plots. After this, these industries begin "producing their crop", based on several factors. The third phase is the most exciting, as it works on the competitive animal in everyone. Surplus production can be sold, while players with a deficit can buy, either through general sales or private auctions. In theory everyone should end up evenly balanced so the colony can thrive, but when people duel for first place it's not so simple.

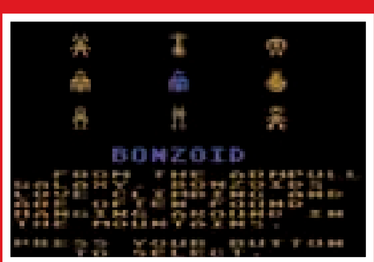
Trip played a key role in designing the economics, and explains, "the key principles were supply and demand and how they affect pricing; economies of scale and how they affect output and costs; the learning curve theory of production and how it increases efficiency at a certain rate based on experience. In the game, one of the great strategies was to organize a way to control the market for Smithore by dominating production while withholding supply from the market. This would drive the price way up. We also increased the marginal rate of return as your experience of producing a certain [thing] went up. This gave you an incentive, like a real business, to specialize in certain areas and become the leader."

This, combined with perfectly simple controls and human interaction, gives *M.U.L.E.* its explosive long-term magnetism. Indeed, *M.U.L.E.* only comes alive with human players. The amount of tactics are endless. You can create a Smithore monopoly, then release all remaining M.U.L.E.s. Without selling Smithore to the store no M.U.L.E.s are produced, which can either lead to personal victory or the colony being doomed. Families who'd agree all morning to co-operate are, come the afternoon game, all out for revenge because someone who didn't need it bought the store's last food units, and won't sell to anyone. The game constantly evolves and demands regular on-the-spot adaptation, sneak deals, and even double crossing. The resulting experience is intense, especially with four friends, and can never be summed up definitively in words.

Despite the deliriously powerful nature of *M.U.L.E.*, its origins at the dawn of the Eighties were low-key. Having previously been involved in the publishing of "Cartels and Cutthroats", Trip Hawkins wanted to make an improved version. Unable to buy the original's rights, he tracked down its creator in Arkansas, Dan



» The NES version, while adequate, is not as good as the original. Towns have unnecessary scrolling which ruins the balance and pacing, not to mention the M.U.L.E. design isn't as good



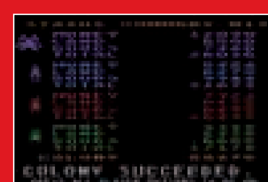
» There are eight separate characters to choose from; shown here is the Bonzoid. Humanoids are for a challenge, Flappers for novices, and Mehcatrons for the computer. Everything else is roughly equal

IN THE KNOW

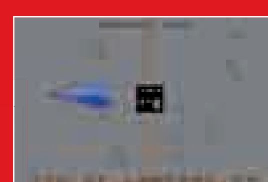


- » **PUBLISHER:** ELECTRONIC ARTS
- » **DEVELOPER:** OZARK SOFTSCAPE
- » **RELEASED:** 1983
- » **GENRE:** MULTI-PLAYER STRATEGY
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £30-£50 (DISK) £5-10 (TAPE)





» For the colony to succeed, the combined total of the 4 player's scores must exceed 60 000, while the one with the highest individual score will become the exalted colony leader



» The transport ship drops you off and returns 12 months later, but there are also random events like thieving pirate ships, crop ruining pestilence, earthquakes, meteor crashes, even M.U.L.E. tap-dancing

THE MAKING OF...

MULE

JOE YBARRA ON PLAYTESTING

"Right about the mid-point when it was getting playable, I started my several hundred hour journey of testing. Many nights I'd come home from work and fire up the Atari 800, with my two-year-old daughter on my lap holding the joystick that didn't work, while I was holding the joystick that did work. I'd get eight or ten games in, and would do that for three or four months, trying to work out all the kinks. I remember a lot of nights staying up until two am playing *M.U.L.E.* and thinking, 'Wow, this game is good!' And then thinking, 'Gee, I wish the A.I. would do this.' (I'd then tell these things to Dan.) A couple of days later I'd get a new build and be back with my daughter on my lap, once again testing and checking to see if it worked. I believe, *M.U.L.E.* was the most tested and best-balanced game that EA produced for many years. That was because there were lots of people that really loved that game, and put a lot of love and attention into it."



"IT WON MORE AWARDS THAN ANY OTHER EA GAME, INCLUDING GAME OF THE YEAR IN JAPAN! BUT HARDLY ANYONE BOUGHT IT" TRIP HAWKINS

Bunton. "[I] asked him if he was interested in having me fund an entirely new game. I had specific direction on user interface, player choices, and degree of difficulty. I also wrote the manual. Dan agreed and he got his group together [Ozark Softscape], and they came up with the concept of the robotic M.U.L.E. on the sci-fi planet. They were truly among the nicest people I've known. Down-to-earth, unpretentious, also very creative and professional. Bill was a sociable guy who was fun to hang out with. Alan was a quiet and solid technical guy. Jim was more of a management type. Dan was the key designer/programmer, and leader of the group. They got inspiration for the visuals from the Imperial Walkers that had debuted in the second *Star Wars* film that had come out [recently]. The M.U.L.E. was cute and the theme song that introduced the game is one of the all-time best."

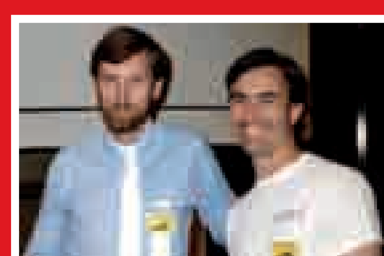
Trip also wanted *M.U.L.E.* to aid learning, long before "edutainment" had negative connotations. "Consumers would learn at the same time they were having fun, because they're thinking and getting their neurotransmitter connections made, but also because the topics and subject matter are worth learning about. You cannot play *M.U.L.E.* without inadvertently learning as much as a college Economics 101 course would teach you." This learning was not forced, but rather a side effect of the immense fun being had.



» Land auctions are tense, since more land gives a huge advantage. Though selling valuable plots can be an easy way to quickly earn big money

Joseph Ybarra, a long-time producer for EA who worked on other notable titles such as *The Bard's Tale*, elaborates on those early days. "In the fall of 1982, I became the producer at Electronic Arts for Dan Bunten. On my first day on the job at EA, the total headcount was seven people. Trip held a draft of prospective developers amongst the three producers. We randomly chose the draft order, and I picked third. I was left with selecting our only remaining developer, Dan Bunten. We all started from the premise that the only successful game based on money, had been *Monopoly*. There were a lot of board game elements we wanted to incorporate into the design of *M.U.L.E.* Of course at the time we didn't know it was going to be called *M.U.L.E.* We had no idea what this game was going to be like. What we had was a template, based on work that Dan had done previously. We would look at those products and ask what do we want to do with something that was essentially a financial game." Mr Ybarra also spoke of the development time, roughly 6 months from October 1982, up until around May 1983 when it launched.

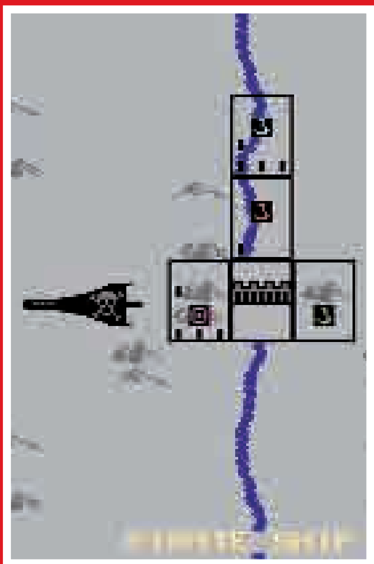
Jim Rushing, a key member of the original team, explained another side to development. "That was back when a team of four people could actually make a game that a lot of people wanted to play. Like my, I guess you could call it my "day contribution", was



» A promotional image from the early days of Ozark Softscape, taken from the Dani Bunten memorial website: www.anticlockwise.com/dani/index.htm

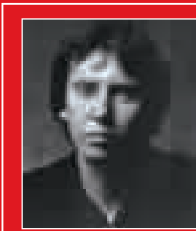


» Strategy existed in every aspect of *M.U.L.E.* – even buying and selling had to be carefully deliberated



» The biggest problem with the NES version is that the map screen doesn't show critical information regarding a plot's future potential productivity. This makes strategic planning needlessly difficult.

"IN MEMORY OF DANI BUNTEN"





It would be impossible to talk about *M.U.L.E.* without mentioning Dan Bunten.

Jim Rushing, key team member, recalls, "I feel really fortunate to have worked with Dan Bunten. He was such a cool person on so many different levels, and he really, really had a passion for gaming, and he had such a great innate sense of what was fun. He was the genius behind the whole thing."

Trip Hawkins also speaks fondly, "Dan had a background in architecture so knew how to organize and plan a software system. He was a good leader because he had the right values. He cared about people and was very kind, and had a big personal commitment to innovation and using games to promote social interaction and learning."

Joe Ybarra adds, "Dan was tremendously respected in the company. More than just respect, I think he had the love of most everybody there as well. His character and the way he interacted with people, and the values he represented; we all felt very special at having that relationship with Dan and the rest of the team."

Daniel Bunten, born 1949, was the mind behind *M.U.L.E.* and other multi-player games. In the early Nineties Dan changed his name and gender, undergoing surgery to become Danielle Bunten Berry. But her commitment to gaming remained strong. She passed away in 1998 due to lung cancer. We recommend visiting the online memorial: www.anticlockwise.com/dani/index.htm

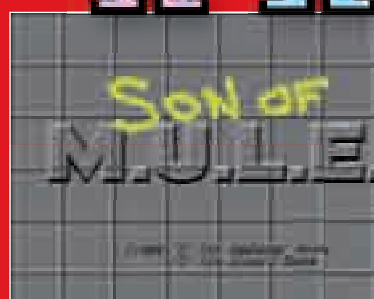
the auction sequence. I designed it and programmed it. But we had these design sessions and we would sit around the table and just talk about the game. Everyone would have ideas, and contribute ideas. Undoubtedly Dan was the creative genius behind everything. I wouldn't want to take any of that away from Dan. But, having said that, it was very democratic in the sense that if I, or Bill, or someone came up with a good idea and the group thought it was a good idea, we would do that. It was just a very tight, trusting group of four guys, as you can imagine."

During the interview we asked if anything had been left out. "There has been so much discussion on the net, with tribute sites and people trying to design "M.U.L.E. Two Point Oh". They come up with a lot of good features, but I don't know… There's something that to me says the simplicity of the original *M.U.L.E.* is hard to beat. We did have some stuff that we couldn't get to, obviously every game development team does. But to tell you the truth I can't really think of anything large that we were not able to do, or that we had to set aside. We were pretty happy with the game."

Jim also shared some trivia, "The working title of the game for quite a long time was "Planet Pioneers," while the "planet" IRATA was "Atari" spelled backwards. The M.U.L.E. came from the concept of the old Wild West (circa 1800s), where you could strike your fortune with 'forty acres and a mule…' and was also influenced by a Robert Heinlein science fiction story. While the Wampus was a tribute to the very ancient '*Hunt The Wampus*' game in BASIC that we played when we were learning programming."

But what about the playtesting hours mentioned in the insert? Trip reveals "[The 3500 number from the liner notes] is probably tongue in cheek and a wild guess. But the truth is of course that there was a ton of testing! This was one of our first games and it was fun to play, so it got "tested" a lot."

It would not be an exaggeration to say that *M.U.L.E.* acts as a modern day fable against the dangers of greed and selfishness, since taking too much throws the entire system out of balance and everyone loses. But what about the future? Could *M.U.L.E.* be re-released on things like Xbox Live Arcade, considering that the rights reverted to Dani's family? Not to reveal too much, but we were informed of two separate and fortunate things that may mean *M.U.L.E.* might be returning officially, online, in one form or another very soon! Until then Retro Gamer implores you, go out and play it with at least two other human players and we sincerely promise you will have fun on a grand scale. If you can't get hold of original Atari 800 hardware, then try out the Commodore 64 and NES versions. You won't be disappointed.



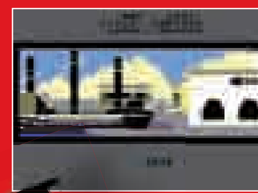
OTHER GAMES IN THE SERIES:
Deluxe M.U.L.E. – Amiga (unreleased)
Son Of M.U.L.E. – Sega Genesis (unreleased)

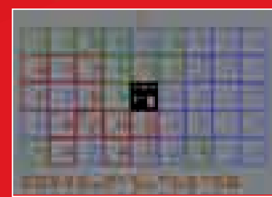
DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

WHEELER DEALERS
APPLE II
YEAR: 1978

CARTELS & CUTTHROAT$
SYSTEMS: APPLE II
YEAR: 1981

THE SEVEN CITIES OF GOLD
SYSTEMS: APPLE II, C64, ATARI 800
YEAR: 1984





» Having two plots of land side by side with the same industry increases their rate of production, as does having 3 or more anywhere on the map. Having 3 side by side results in unprecedented levels of production



» In the town you can buy a M.U.L.E. from the available amount (which increases when Smithore is sold), and kit it out for farming, mining (Smithore or Crystite), or energy production

MANY THANKS TO JIM RUSHING, JOE YBARRA AND TRIP HAWKINS FOR THEIR INVALUABLE ASSISTANCE. THANKS ALSO TO CHRISTIAN SCHILLER FOR ASSISTANCE AND PROVIDING EXCLUSIVE IMAGES. BE SURE TO CHECK OUT HIS ASTOUNDING TRIBUTE SITE, WWW.WORLDOFMULE.NET

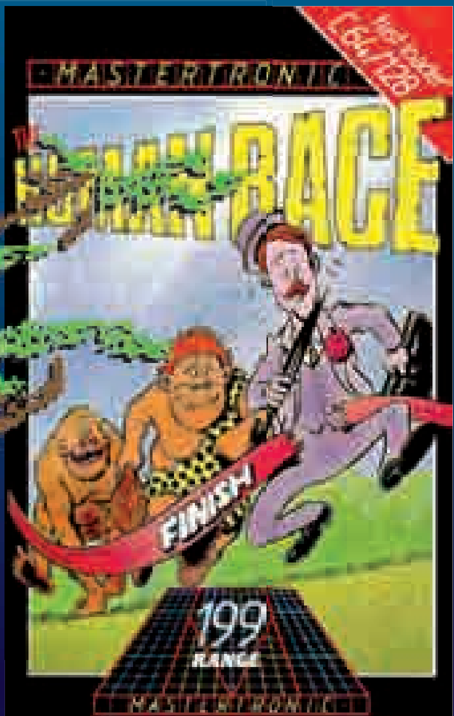
GOOD GOD!



COMPUTER GAMES HAVE EVOLVED GREATLY, FROM THE SIMPLE DAYS OF PONG TO THE MULTI-MILLION POLYGONS OF MODERN GAMING. BUT WHAT ABOUT PLAYING GOD AND CONTROLLING LIFE ITSELF? THERE HAVE BEEN MANY GREAT GAMES BASED AROUND THIS THEME, AND WITH WILL WRIGHT (CREATOR OF SIM CITY) WORKING ON HIS NEW EVOLUTION GAME SPORE, IT'S TIME TO LOOK BACK AND SEE HOW THINGS HAVE CHANGED…

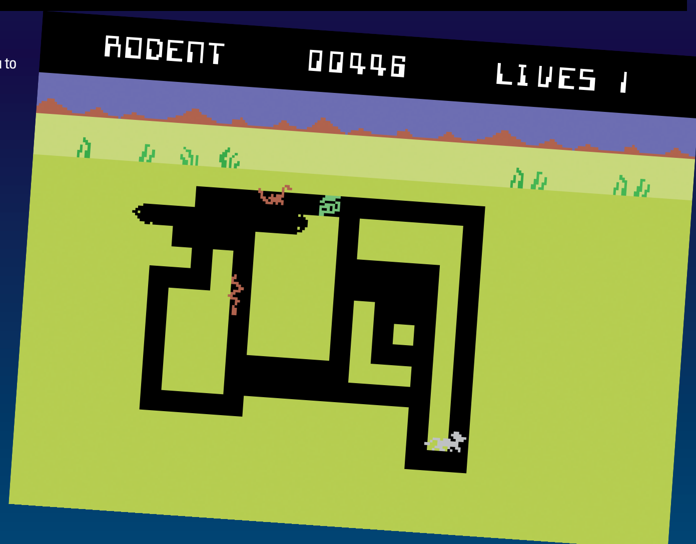
***Evolution* on the ColecoVision was six single-screen games linked together. It started off with the player controlling an amoeba, picking up genes and avoiding other simple life forms.** Then it's off to the pond with a frog, avoiding killer-fish as it feeds. Next up is a simplistic *Dig Dug* clone that sees a rodent eating cheese in a maze full of snakes. The rodent evolves into a beaver that must fetch logs from the other side of a crocodile-infected lake. Getting on to dry land, the gorilla has to throw skulls at monkeys, before the final level sees a human in a futuristic landscape zapping aliens. The world explodes, and life begins again…

Evolution later appeared on the Commodore 64 as well, with slightly different presentation, but similar gameplay. Frogs also feature in *Savage Pond*, an unusual little 8-bit game based around the life cycle of a frog. You started off as a tadpole and had to eat worms, dragonfly eggs and beetle larvae in order to grow bigger. Hazards include the deadly hydra and a water spider. Eventually you would grow into a frog and catch the dragonflies with your long sticky tongue – but watch out for the radioactive waste being dumped into the pond. While the game was available for the C64 and Spectrum,





» **Left:** Mastertronic's *The Human Race* had five unique challenges to complete **Above:** *Designasaurus* allowed you to build your own 'terrible lizard'. Perfect for the dinosaur nut



» If there's one thing worse we find worse than playing *Dig Dug*, it's playing a *Dig Dug* clone. Oh the humanity…

World of Spectrum currently lists it as "missing in action" – perhaps you could find it…

So, onto *Evolution* for the Spectrum: a title published by Microsphere in 1983. It's a strategy game about life evolving on Earth through many geological ages. As time went by the temperature and conditions changed, natural disasters happened and there became greater competition for food (although an 'easy' mode could be selected that had fewer factors to consider). The screen display is all text, except for the moving bar graphs representing time and temperature. If you're a biology student this could be very interesting, otherwise you may want to look elsewhere.

GROWTH SPURT

Mastertronic told the story of *The Human Race* on the Commodore 64. Five levels recreate the evolution from monkey to man. Each single-screen level has a particular aim and some tricky hazards. Level 1 saw a monkey climbing trees to reach the big banana, while level 2 had the monkey on two legs avoiding lava. Level 3's caveman had to participate in some log rolling, level 4 put you on a deadly "chessboard" in a cave, while the final vertically scrolling level had you racing from 10,000BC to 2000AD (with historical inventions scrolling past as you ran away from death, in the form of a skeleton).

Programmed by John Ferrari, the C64 version had the added benefit of an amazing soundtrack by Rob Hubbard, with each level playing a different tune. Tune four in particular has been covered and remixed many times – and was re-used on the Atari ST and Amiga as the theme to *GoldRunner*, a vertically-scrolling shoot-'em-up.

Moving even further back in time is *Designasaurus* on the C64. This educational game starts with a synthesized roar and three main options. Print a Dinosaur lets you print out facts about several different dinosaurs with a black & white picture. Build a Dinosaur lets you put together parts – head, neck, body and tail – to make and name your own

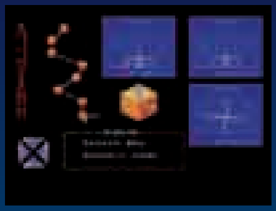
"EVOLUTION ON THE COLECOVISION WAS SIX SINGLE-SCREEN GAMES LINKED TOGETHER. IT STARTED OFF WITH THE PLAYER CONTROLLING AN AMOEBA, PICKING UP GENES AND AVOIDING SIMPLE LIFE FORMS"



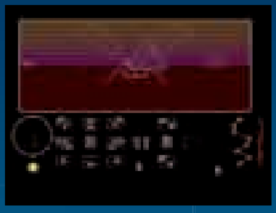
"ECO HAD YOU STARTING OFF IN A LOWLY FORM, AS AN INSECT. THE ICON PANEL ALLOWED YOU TO MOVE AROUND, AVOIDING PREDATORS AND HUNTING FOR WHAT YOU NEEDED TO SURVIVE – FOOD AND A MATE"



» Open the door, get on the floor, everybody walk the dinosaur… (*Designasaurus*, C64)



» *DNA strands in Eco.* Everything has to start somewhere…



» Fly my pretty! The icons are used to control your beast, but this one is running out of energy… (*ECO*, Amiga)

fossil. Finally, Walk a Dinosaur puts you in control of a brontosaurus, stegosaurus or tyrannosaur. You have to eat enough calories to survive, whilst avoiding or attacking the other dinosaurs. There is an irritating flicker as the beasts turn around, but the rest of the graphics (particularly the detailed backgrounds of various prehistoric habitats) are very nicely drawn.

WAITING FOR ECO

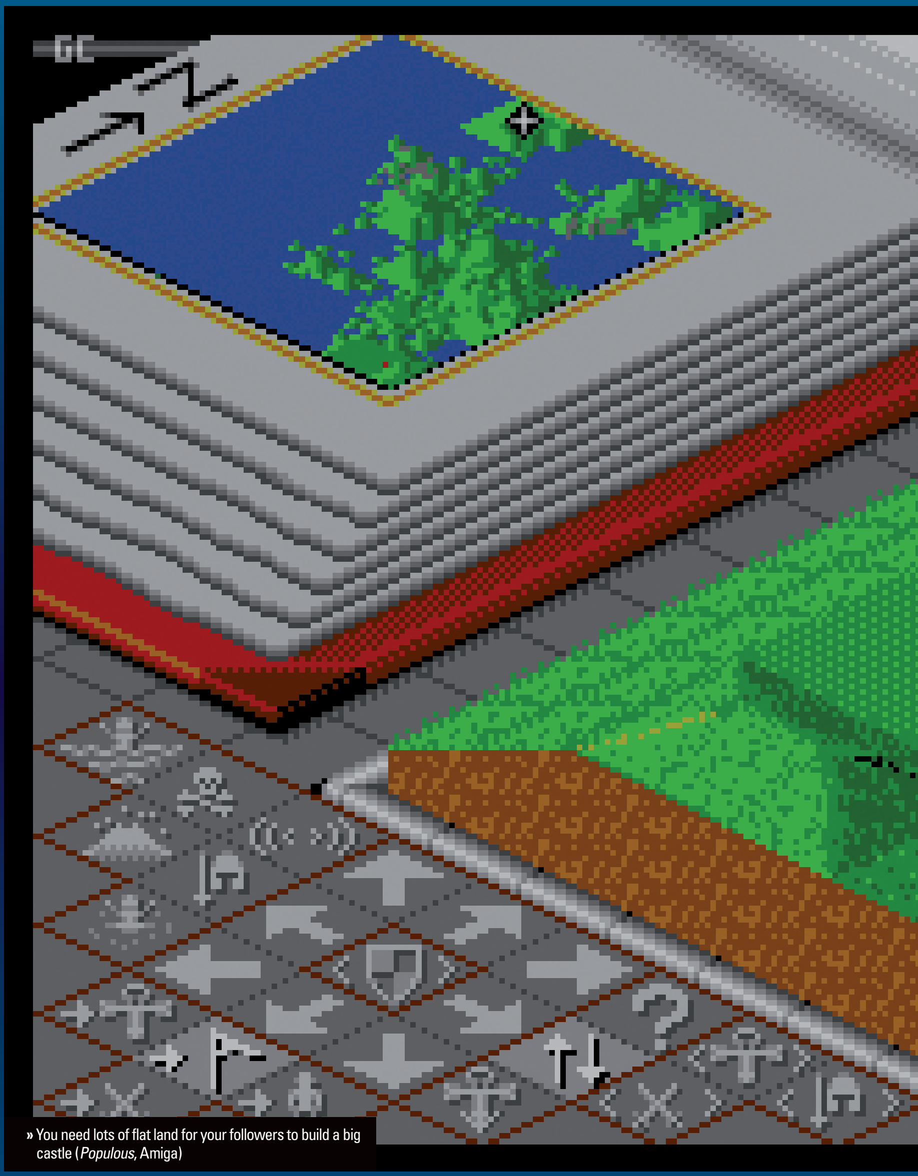
A game famous for its long development time on the Amiga & Atari ST was *ECO: A Game Of Survival*, written by the legendary Denton Designs and published by Ocean. It was previewed and hyped in several magazines, and even appeared in computer shop videos, long before its eventual release in 1988.

Like many similar games, *ECO* had you starting off in a lowly form, in this case as an insect. The icon control panel allowed you to move around, avoiding predators and hunting for what you needed to survive – food and a mate. Once you'd eaten food and mated, you could unlock one of the genes that made up your genetic code. By altering the genes, your creature can grow into a new form – like a winged insect, a plant eater and ultimately a "human".

The wire-frame graphics were very clever, portraying each creature in rotating 3D and the individual animations (like the fly's beating wings) have a lot of character. It takes a few attempts to get used to how the genes affect your creature's growth, but by then you're completely drawn into *ECO*'s unique world.

DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

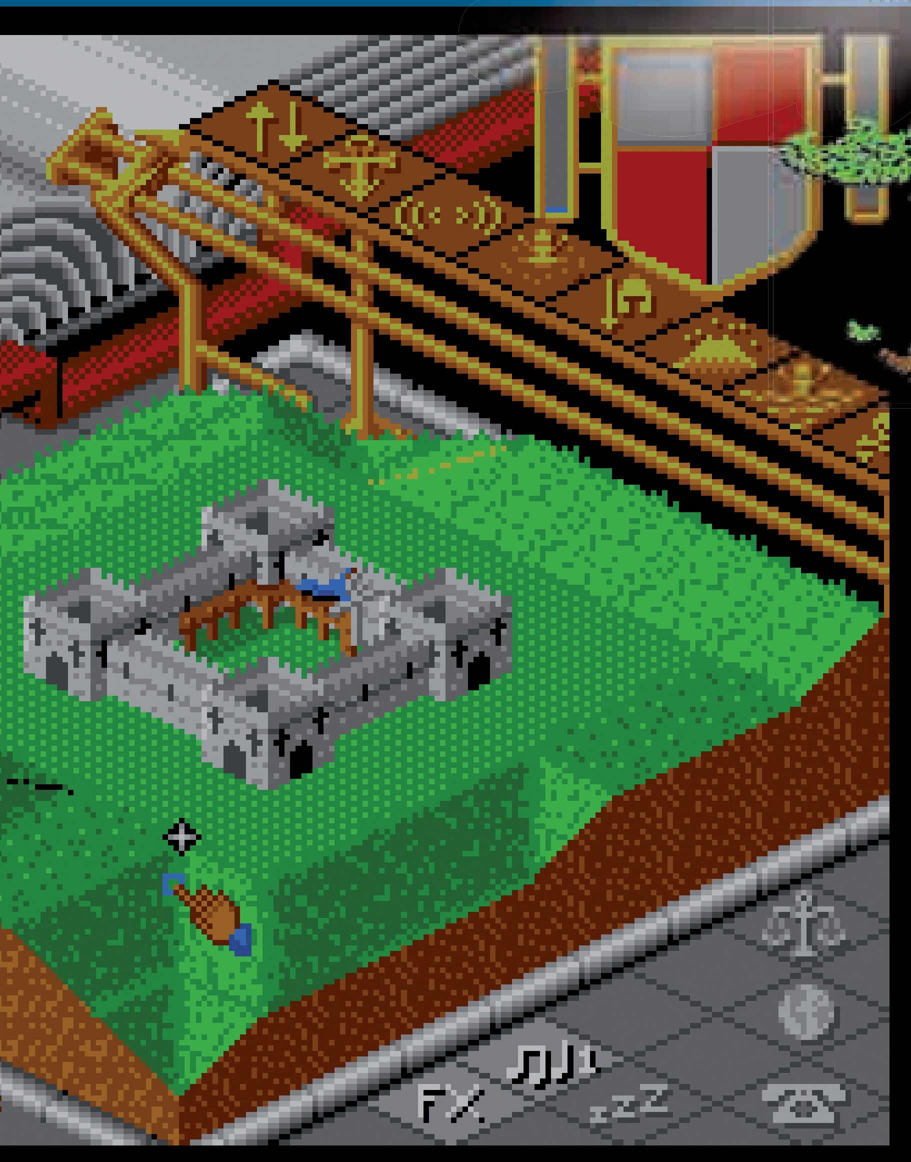
Populous by Peter Molyneux and Bullfrog was one of the first 'God games', and was released in 1989 (the same year as *Sim City*). Playing as a deity, the aim was to help your followers using your supernatural powers to change the terrain and help them populate the land. The more people you had, the more mana (magical energy) you could use. Unleashing nasty tricks like volcanoes could sap your opponent's strength, while sending out knights to conquer the enemy will ultimately lead to your final victory.



» You need lots of flat land for your followers to build a big castle (*Populous*, Amiga)

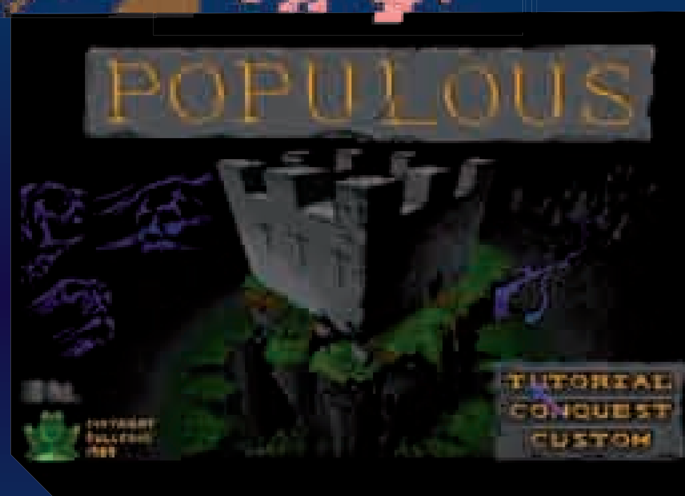
There were 500 levels to explore in the original Amiga and ST versions, with two expansion disks quickly following. '*The Promised Lands*' had five new graphic styles (including "Block Town", inspired by the Lego used to create maps for the original game), while '*The Final Frontier*' disk took place on a completely different planet with all-new backgrounds.

The isometric viewpoint (made to look like a page in a book) was fairly slow to move, but looked amazing. Sound and music were okay, although the heartbeat often got annoying. The icon-driven control system had both good and bad points – in a tense situation, for example, it was all too easy to hit the wrong icon and miss an opportunity. There was also



a two-player option via a modem, and for the time it was unusual in allowing different formats (e.g. PC and Amiga) to play against each other.

The SNES and Mega Drive received versions of *Populous* in 1991, along with the 8-bit Master System (which had to make do with a greatly reduced viewing area to keep the speed up). Although the console versions were sadly one-player only, they did feature some of the add-on disks' extra graphics. The inevitable sequel, *Populous II: Trials Of The Olympian Gods* featured a series of computer-controlled gods to conquer and threw in new features such as powers, heroes and mythical monsters. The third game in the franchise followed in 1999 for the PlayStation and PC, and finally took the game into three dimensions. Each level of *Populous: The Beginning* was a small planet, and now your followers could become a priest, a knight or even a powerful shaman. An add-on disk for the PC version entitled *Undiscovered Worlds* soon followed and saw

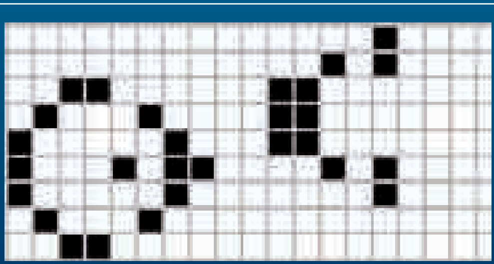


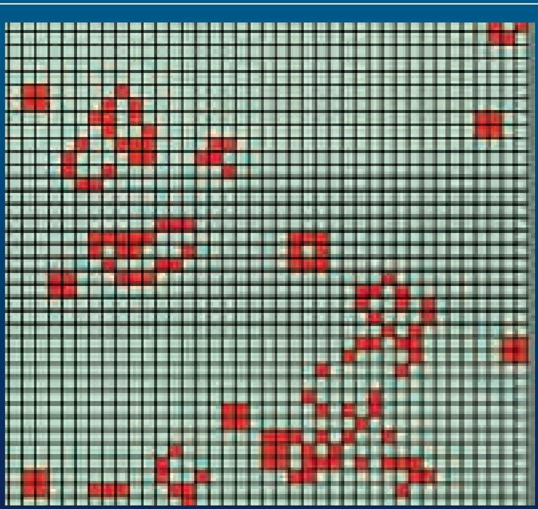
» Bullfrog's *Populous* was a huge success when it was released in 1989 and featured a staggering 500 levels to play through. It soon appeared on many other systems including the SNES and Mega Drive



» Much of the land in *Populous* was initially inhospitable, so you had to use all the divine powers at your disposal to turn it into a pleasant sanctuary for your followers to live in

GOOD GOD!





DON'T TALK TO ME ABOUT LIFE

One of the earliest computer "games" is based on the principle of cells, and was created by mathematician John Conway. A grid of squares contains empty cells (dead) and filled cells (alive). The rules are simple:

Any live cell with fewer than two neighbours dies of loneliness.
Any live cell with more than three neighbours dies of overcrowding.
Any dead cell with exactly three neighbours comes to life.
Any live cell with two or three neighbours stays alive.

» **Left:** John Conway's *Game Of Life* may not look like much but don't let that fool you

From these basic rules, amazing interactions and patterns were built, with the simplest forms including the glider, which could move diagonally. The fun came when stable patterns where hit by moving ones, thus creating an explosion of new cells and killing others. The famous "Gosper gun" fires a stream of gliders, perfect for creating new life. Read more at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conway%27s_Game_of_Life



» If only all guides in life were as attractive as *E.V.O.*'s Gaia…



» Creating bustling metropolises in *Sim City* was great fun

"SPORE, THE NEW GAME IN DEVELOPMENT BY WILL WRIGHT, COULD BE CONSIDERED A DESCENDANT OF SIM EARTH – STARTING FROM A FEW CELLS AND GROWING TO A CULTURE CAPABLE OF SPACE FLIGHT"



» Eat the jellyfish to earn Evolution points and upgrade your creature (*EVO*, Super Nintendo)

you playing a female shaman. There's also *Populous Re-incarnated* that allowed online tournaments and had a world editor – http://www.strategyplanet.com/populous/index.asp – there's also news that a new game (tentatively titled *Populous 4*, and based on *Populous – The Beginning*) is currently in development by fans.

SETTLE DOWN

If you're interested in more level-conquering action then you may want to take a look at the excellent *Settlers* series. Starting out on the Amiga and in DOS, Blue Byte's game was based around territory and resource management. Constructing buildings is the key – from mines to workshops to military buildings. Eventually you'll come into conflict with your neighbour; then it's time to send in the troops…

One of the most interesting aspects of *Settlers II: Veni Vidi Vici* is that it's based around a shipwreck. A crew of Romans run aground and set up a new colony in a strange new land. There are many more types of building this time around, and the little men that populate the world are beautifully animated – from the geologist striking rocks with his hammer, to the soldiers cowering behind their big shields. *Settlers III* gave you control of Egyptians and Chinese, plus access to deadly weapons like the catapult and spell-casting priests.

THE WHOLE PLANET

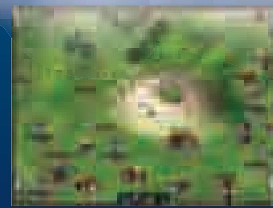
Enix is well known for its role-playing games on the SNES, but *E.V.O Search For Eden* is nowhere near as famous as its *Dragon Quest* series, which is a shame as it's very enjoyable. The spirit of Gaia is your guide through a long journey that starts off with you controlling a simple fish in a side-scrolling pond. Attacking and eating enemies earns you evolution points, similar to experience points, which can then be traded in to upgrade different parts of your body – for example, stronger jaws will give you an overall higher attack strength. When the level is complete, you move on to the next section in the overhead map and fight more enemies until you evolve into an amphibian that's capable of walking on land. The story continues through the age of dinosaurs, the Ice Age and finally to humans, when you eventually reach Eden…

Maxis tried several different ideas with the "*Sim*" series after the success of the original, and two of them fit snugly within the



» *The Settlers* initially started off on the Amiga and PC DOS. The latest game in the franchise, *The Settlers: Heritage of Kings* is currently available on the PC

evolution category. *Sim Life* let you control a whole ecosystem, altering things like the climate and the genetic make-up of animals and plants. As with *Sim City*, you can unleash disaster on your creations or be more benign. *Sim Earth* goes one step further and lets you guide a whole planet through 10 billion years of history. You get to move mountains, cause earthquakes and watch as life evolves from single cells to humans capable of space flight. *Spore*, the new game in development by Will Wright, could be considered a descendant of *Sim Earth* – starting from a few cells and growing to a culture capable of space flight. The "procedural programming" being used allows the graphics to evolve based on simple rules, rather than needing millions of pre-drawn graphics and a huge development team. There is also a lot of player customisation – from skin textures to buildings, all can be created in-game by the player and shared via the Internet. It's already shaping up to be one of the most anticipated titles of 2006, and with the pedigree of its ancestors is sure to be an essential title. It would appear the genre is beginning to evolve once more.



» This is your goal in every level of *Settlers II*, the gateway

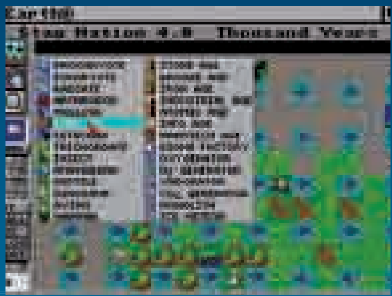
CULTURE SHOCK

The *Civilization* series by Sid Meier started life back in 1991. Controlling an ancient culture, the player had to manage resources, develop new technologies, carry out diplomacy or fight for survival as they sought to rule the world. Starting small with a single city, as time progressed you met and negotiated with historical figures like Queen Elizabeth and Abraham Lincoln, while building "wonders", making scientific discoveries and building military strength helped increase your influence. The original DOS game was later converted to Windows, Amiga, ST and SNES.

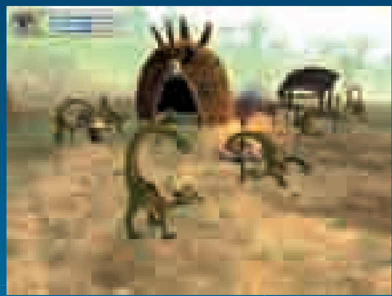
The overhead map was replaced with an isometric viewpoint in *Civilisation 2*, but the ultimate aim of reaching space is the same. Add-ons and new editions have played an important part in expanding and developing the series, like the Multi-Player Gold Edition and the Fantastic Worlds disk with new scenarios and maps.



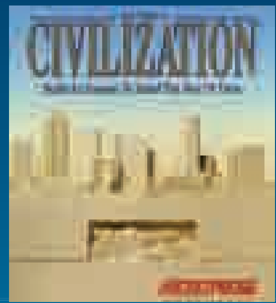
» Don't be fooled by all the graphs, *SimEarth* is a lot of fun



» *SimEarth* took the gameplay of *Sim City* to a whole new level

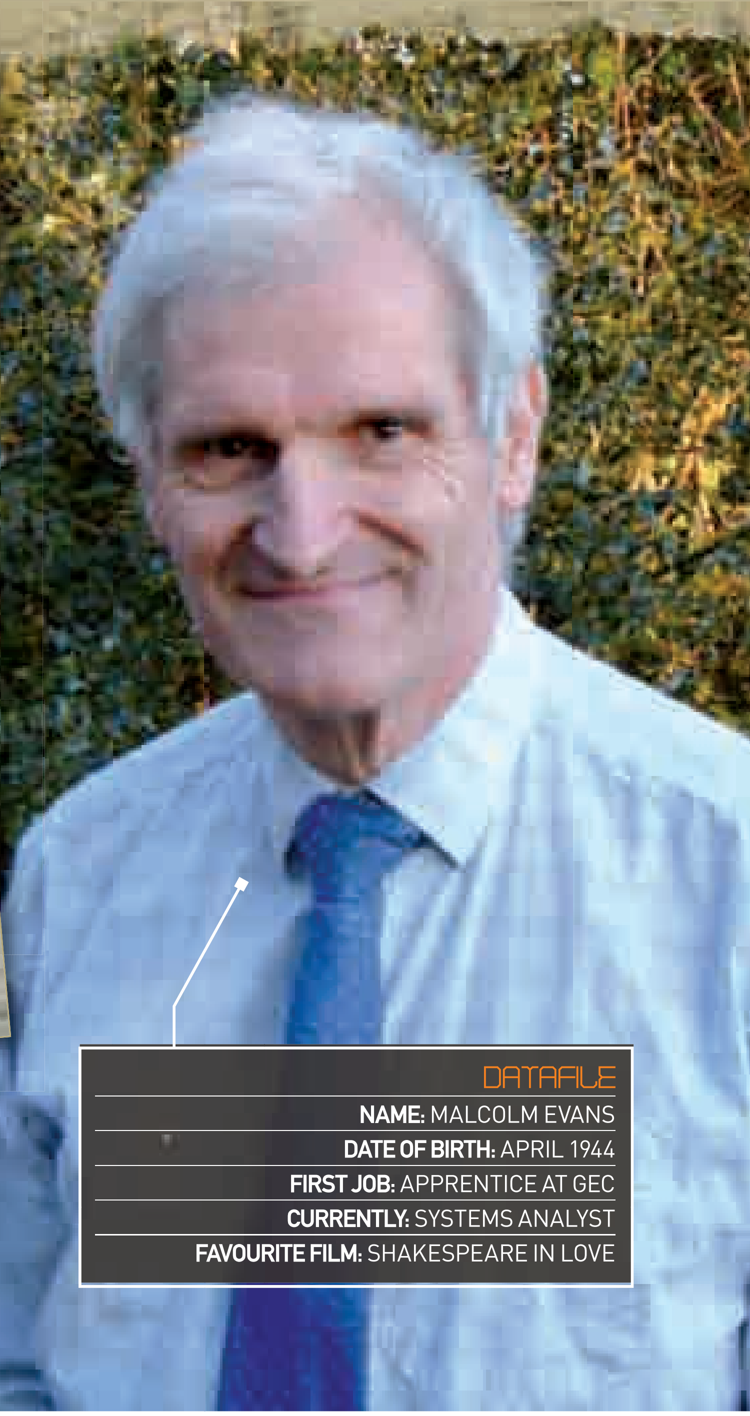


» Will Wright's *Spore* looks set to be the pinnacle of the genre



DESERT ISLAND DISKS

WHAT CHERISHED GAMES WOULD YOU TAKE TO THE ISLAND?





» The New Generation - Malcolm and Rod Evans

MALCOLM EVANS

DATAFILE

NAME: MALCOLM EVANS
DATE OF BIRTH: APRIL 1944
FIRST JOB: APPRENTICE AT GEC
CURRENTLY: SYSTEMS ANALYST
FAVOURITE FILM: SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE

HE SPENT HIS YOUTH AND NOW HIS AUTUMNAL YEARS SENDING UP SATELLITES, BUT IN BETWEEN MALCOLM EVANS PIONEERED 3D GAMES PROGRAMMING. HE PRODUCED 3D MONSTER MAZE, CITED AS THE BEST GAME EVER TO GRACE THE ZX81, AND CONTINUED HIS GROUND-BREAKING WORK ON THE SPECTRUM WITH TITLES SUCH AS KNOT IN 3D AND CORRIDORS OF GENON. HIS MOST FAMOUS CREATION THOUGH WAS THE HUMBLE TRASHMAN, AN OLD SCHOOL ECO-WARRIOR WHO ALWAYS HAD TIME FOR A LITTLE CONVERSATION WITH THE HOUSEHOLDERS ON HIS REFUGE-COLLECTING ROUTE. HERE, WE TAKE A SELECTION OF THE WITTY QUIPS, BAD PUNS AND INANE BANTER CONTAINED IN TRASHMAN'S FIRST OUTING AS CUES TO MALCOLM'S DEFINITELY NOT RUBBISH STORY…

"Would you like a Quick Byte?" "Good grief! He liked it!"

Malcolm's first taste of computing was in the days before chips. He worked on the hardware for the Black Arrow satellite, launched in 1972, whilst employed at GEC and used a PDP-8 for testing – a machine that still relied on transistors and resistors. "You had to boot it up by flicking switches," recalls Malcolm, wistfully.

By the late 1970s, he was working on aero engines at Sperry Gyroscope in Bristol but was becoming disillusioned with the hardware side of computing and headed for the Careers Advice office to seek guidance on how to move to software development.

"They said I should stay in my rut because software was full of young people and I was too old. That was enough for my wife to get me a ZX81… half as a joke I think."

"Do you want a copy of 3D Monster Maze*?" "What did you expect? An original!!"*

3D Monster Maze was indeed highly original. Whilst others were struggling to get a few flickering invaders to stutter down the screen, Malcolm was creating a 3D maze and a huge, hulking T-Rex. Even more startling than the marauding dinosaur was the fact that this was his very first piece of programming of any kind. Exactly why did he throw himself so recklessly in at the deep end?

"Because I didn't know it couldn't be done!" Malcolm exclaims. "I hadn't seen any other games – I just wanted to do something and I was learning assembler as I went along. As programming problems arose, I tried to tackle them. Everything was new to me – I was just playing around with logic. If I'd known what else was available on the ZX81, I would have gone for something easier!"

The project evolved as Malcolm's skills grew. First he created a 2D maze then wondered if he could change the algorithm to display the series of corridors in 3D. A conversation with future business partner John Greye at a Spanish Guitar Group in Bath led to the addition of the T-Rex, which



» **Left:** Former C&VG editor Eugene Lacey tackling *Trashman*. **Below:** The NGS team (l-r) Paul Bunn, Rod Evans, James Day and Malcolm







» **Left:** Even camp cowboys couldn't help Malcolm-penned NGS games succeed. **Right:** Breakout in 1K for £2 in 1982

Malcolm meticulously created on graph paper before putting it into an area containing the pattern for each block of four squares.

"The resolution was so low that some of the far off images are pretty vague, but certainly as it got closer, it was pretty convincing. I remember working late one night in my bedroom and my wife was dozing, when suddenly the T-Rex came on to me. I jumped out of my skin! She burst out laughing but I found it frightening and I thought if it had that effect on me… so I put a warning on the title screen that you played at your own risk. I was only half joking."

"Do you think I'm a megalomaniac?"

"Give me a ZX81 and I'll control the world!"

The quip comes from Sir Clive's assertion that a humble ZX81 could be used to control a power station – which may explain the Chernobyl disaster – but Malcolm is keen to point out the machine's attributes.

"The screen display was addressed indirectly, which meant you could draw the image off screen and then switch it over immediately. It meant you could do big things, like the T-Rex, and if you synchronised it to the frame rate – there was a flag that told you when the screen update cycle was starting – you could eliminate flicker. In that respect, it was a lot more flexible than the Spectrum."

Malcolm also worked his magic to utilise the full screen and produce a playable version of *Breakout* in 1K. "That impressed the buyer at WHSmiths," Malcolm recalls. "Particularly when I said we could sell it for £2."

And so he invents budget software almost in passing…

"D'you want a game of Space Invaders*?"*

"Get out! Zapping cats is not part of the game."

No *3D Invaders*, but Malcolm did complete *3D Defender*. "It was an experiment in 3D. I wanted to see if I could create a ground that was passing beneath you all the time. I then added a spacecraft and made it a shoot 'em up, but in hindsight it needed more work – it was too simple. But then most of the games back then didn't have much to them…"

With three finished games to his name, and having recently been made redundant, Malcolm decided to throw his hat in full-time with John Greye, who also had three titles already published. He became a partner in J.K. Greye Software and he would spend mornings at John's house dealing with mail orders and then program in the afternoon and most evenings, whilst his business associate snoozed upstairs.

"He was a late bird was John. The idea was he'd carry on and do his bit when he got up in the afternoon. But he never seemed to be there when I or anyone else rang. In our first six months, he never produced anything and his contribution, as far as I could see, was zero. We had a parting of the ways. Very acrimonious, I might add."

"Take this thing away. My son is obsessed."

"No one will believe I've picked up a Spectrum."

"I suppose it had become an obsession by then," Malcolm acknowledges. "I felt at home in the games industry. It was friendly and I knew a lot of people, so it was natural to set something up on my own."

He called his venture 'New Generation Software', taken from a line he'd come up with for a magazine advert and on acquiring one of the first Spectrums in the country, he began working on an updated version of *3D Monster Maze*.

"It ended up more like a down-rated one," says Malcolm, apologising for the rather disappointing Escape. "I found I couldn't do such large images or switch the screen quickly – I was limited to smaller characters, so I tried to put more in and still keep it looking 3D. Then I stuck in the pterodactyl which flew over the lot and disobeyed all the rules… that really messed things up."

"WHY DID I TRY TO DO A 3D GAME ON THE ZX-81? BECAUSE I DIDN'T KNOW IT COULDN'T BE DONE!"

MALCOLM EVANS

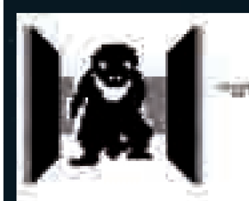
Moving from the ZX81 to Spectrum proved to be a surprisingly steep learning curve, though by the company's second release, *3D Tunnel*, things were improving. Malcolm used a lot of colour switching to give the impression things were looming out of the screen towards you and it was an idea he developed further with the ambitious and artistic *Knot* in 3D.

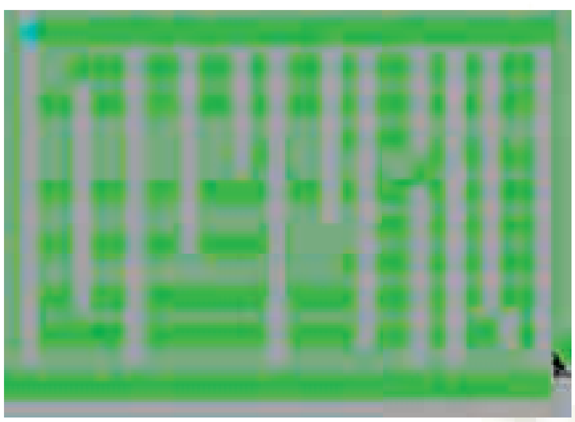
"There were no graphics at all – it was all done with colour. A friend had a BBC micro with *Snake* and I wondered what it would look like in 3D. I imagined lines radiating out from the centre but they weren't lines, they were just changes in colour. Initially, there's not much going on but by eighty per cent full

YOU MUST PLAY…

3D Monster Maze

Often credited as kick-starting the whole FPS genre, an observant fellow scribe has recently noted that the panic-inducing, 'RUN! HE IS BEHIND YOU!' warnings, the eerie silence, ominous footsteps and relentless pursuit could actually make it the first survival horror title. Historically important and a technical marvel, the sight of a screen-filling T-Rex bearing down on you can still shock 25 years on.





» **Left:** Malcolm's first Spectrum game, *Escape*, had less than convincing 3D **Right:** 'When I were a lad, we couldn't even quit without a fight…'







» **Left:** Rene Magritte's favourite Spectrum game. **Above:** Jonah Barrington was clearly dismayed by the quality of the speech synthesis in his game





» **Above:** An early NGS advert, complete with mail order form. **Right:** New Generation pioneered 3D gaming and hand drawn game ads

"WE ALMOST GOT EDDIE YATES TO SPONSOR TRASHMAN, BUT HE WAS JUST TOO EXPENSIVE"

MALCOLM EVANS

TALKING TRASH

The thirty couplets contained in *Trashman* were intended to provide a bit of entertainment for those watching the game, but after a fruitless brainstorming session with brother Rod, Malcolm ended up composing them all himself. My personal favourite is, 'Fancy a swift 'arf? Last time I saw *Trashman* 'e were pi-eyed and wiv a sailor' – proving that cruising for sailors was not invented as a valid videogaming goal by Ryo in Shenmue after all. "That's from my youth in Portsmouth," winks Malcolm, worryingly.

The full story of *Trashman* can be found in RG 11 and has recently been reprinted in the current Anthology. However, I can't resist asking Malcolm if he's aware of Stuart Campbell's mission to visit all the streets mentioned in the game, which actually exist in and around Bath. What's the story behind Lyncombe Vale, described as having a 'strange Royston Vasey air about it'? Was this location really full of bizarre *League Of Gentlemen* oddballs?

'Erm, that was where I lived,' explains Malcolm. Whoops.



» *Trashman* was set in Bath – where the streets DID have names...

it gets really hectic. You really need to be in it to know what's going on…"

Most didn't. The game was not a commercial success, but it has an abstract, hypnotic quality that makes it perhaps Malcolm's most interesting experiment.

"Oh dear, what should I do? My husband's been taken away."

"He was a Schiziod."

So, having become a self-confessed workaholic, did his wife Linda ever regret giving Malcolm that ZX81? "Well, she never said so," he assures me. "The nice house we had in Bath when things were going well probably helped."

Linda can't have been too put out by Malcolm's devotion to New Generation as she became the company secretary and was joined in 1983 by Malcolm's twin brother Rod, who took over much of the business side to leave Malcolm to focus on coding – an arrangement that proved to be 'virtually harmonious throughout.'

"Give us a hand mate."

"That was NOT funny. Applauding while everything collapsed."

The pressure on Malcolm to produce a stream of successful releases was increasing. The company bought in the bizarre *Atic Atac* meets *Ready Steady Cook* game *The Custard Kid* and recruited help from two young programmers, Paul Bunn and James Day, who produced *Shoot The Rapids* and *Cliff Hanger* respectively. "I let them come up with ideas and we'd talk it over and decide what to go for," explains Malcolm.

The trio of titles only just broke even financially and soon James was off to study Computer Science at University whilst Paul continued as a programmer elsewhere but he was involved in a fatal car crash the following year. "I read about the tragedy in the computer press, but then six months later, Rod received a request for a reference for him. Very strange. I always wondered if he'd done a Reggie Perrin."

"Come here, I've got something for you."

"I didn't mean you to eat it."

Tenuous link here, as I ask why the speech in *Jonah Barrington's Squash* sounds like Jonah's been swallowed by a whale?

Malcolm grimaces. "The sound was originally very good. I had designed a bit of hardware that didn't convert sampled speech into 8 digits as normal, but put it into a whole string of ones and noughts. I found a way to get the stack to switch quickly back and forth to produce the sound and it worked really well. But when it was released, it was much worse and it wasn't till afterwards I worked out that during the spaces between the words, the thing was set to either one or zero and it meant the attack was all wrong."

The licence proved a good way to increase press interest in the game and Jonah himself was suitably impressed, despite spending ten minutes playing it and failing to hit the ball once. It wasn't the first time New Generation sought a celebrity licence – *Trashman* was almost sponsored by *Coronation Street*'s own loveable bin man Eddie Yates…

"Please help me find my doggy woggy."

"You've been a great help. At least I know where he's been."

So to lost projects and Malcolm tells of three months spent developing a four-way scrolling graphical adventure set inside a bug-ridden computer. Assistance as you traversed the chip was provided by 'The Chip Monk', confirming his abiding fondness for bad puns.

The game was never completed due to time constraints and the mooted third instalment in the *Trashman* series was never even started, despite *Travels With Trashman* concluding with a hint that the intrepid recycler might 'do a *Dr Who*.'

"It was Rod's idea to put something in at the end in case we ever needed to go back and do a third game. We wondered where *Trashman* could go next and Rod said, 'Sod it, let's put in a Time Machine…"

"Help me! Sophie's drowning. Can you revive her?"

"If you hadn't laughed, the gold-fish might still be alive."

The chances of resuscitating New Generation as a software house are nil, confirms Malcolm, since its back catalogue was sold off to Virgin in 1986 to fund what proved to be an unsuccessful venture into hardware and software development – though the portable machine it built to operate its own kitchen design package featured a touchscreen and stylus which predated Nintendo's DS by two decades.

Now Malcolm is back where he started. "My last project was a satellite designed to measure the thickness of the icecaps. It went up just before Christmas and crashed straight into the North Pole. Before that, I worked on Beagle 2 and that crashed into Mars. I keep telling them I'm a Jonah, but no one believes me…"

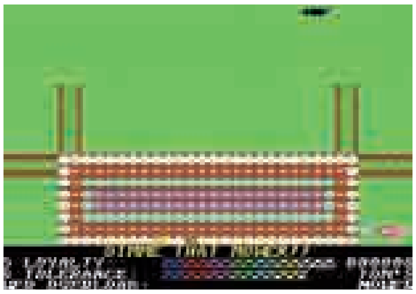




» **Far left:** Malcolm's work station, with a Sharp PC connected to a Speccy. **Right:** In *3D Tunnel*, Malcolm used the Spectrum's garish colours to give the illusion of 3D



MALCOLM EVANS DESERT ISLAND DISKS



HOVER BOVVER C64

1 "I have to admit I haven't played that many games – I was too busy writing and testing my own – but I found this to be really addictive. A neat game and quite unusual."



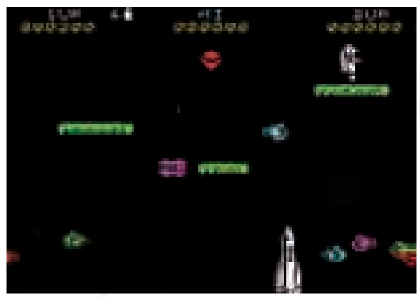
ATTACK OF THE MUTANT CAMELS C64

2 "Another of Jeff Minter's games. I remember he was trying to get it released in the States and the authorities responded with a report from a psychologist saying the game was too violent. I wonder what he'd make of games nowadays…"



MANIC MINER SPECTRUM

3 "It was a great improvement on other games of that style and of that time. I never did get to meet Matthew Smith though…"



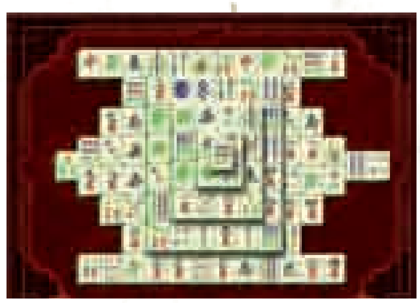
JETPAC SPECTRUM

4 "I just liked floating around with a jetpack on. The graphics were very good, though I didn't like the flickering. I don't like flickering full-stop."



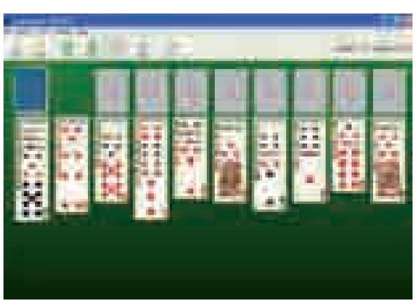
KNOT IN 3D SPECTRUM

5 "Of my own games, the ones I'm most proud of are *3D Monster Maze*, *Trashman* and this. I'll take this because I think it was the least appreciated. I just think the reviewers didn't understand it. You've got to be in it to play it."



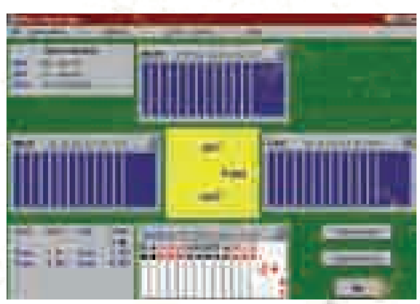
MAH JONG PC

6 "Much more complicated than it looks. You have to remember what's gone and work out what you shouldn't take. You've really got to think and not just take the obvious pairs."



SPIDER SOLITAIRE PC

7 "I play this a lot on my PC – it's on every PC, isn't it? I play it whenever I'm waiting for something to boot up. Guilty, boss."



BLUE CHIP BRIDGE PC

8 "A computer version of the card game. I don't want to get involved in a Bridge school where you have to turn up every week – I'm happier with this. Though expensive, it's probably the best Bridge Tutor around."



SPACE HARRIER

THAR BE DRAGONS



- » **PUBLISHER** SEGA
- » **RELEASED:** 1985
- » **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ARCADE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £400+ (ORIGINAL MACHINE)



HISTORY

Welcome to the Fantasy Zone; and with five little words, I began a love affair with Sega that's still going on 21 years later.

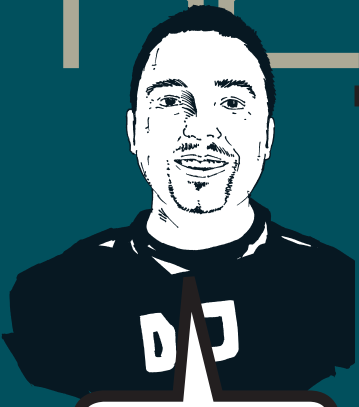
Sure, I'd played games by Sega before Yu Suzuki's *Space Harrier* came along, but never had I experienced a game, arcade or otherwise, that made such a huge impression on me. Perhaps I was mesmerised by the outrageously gaudy worlds that my *Space Harrier* raced through, or maybe it was the huge hydraulic cabinet. Whatever it was, something about *Space Harrier* thrilled me like no other game.

To a bored 12-year old who was getting mightily fed up with the likes of *Dig-Dug* (a game I still loathe) *Pac-Man* and *Space Invaders,* Suzuki's new game was a revelation. For starters it was fast, insanely fast, and it made my favourite Speccy game at the time (*3D Deathchase* in case you're wondering) seem positively pedestrian. Oh, and then you had the dragons… Huge, meticulously detailed bosses that were as deadly as they were beautiful, and all the while that glorious theme tune pumped away in the background.

Yes, it was difficult, but by god, *Space Harrier* was a thing of beauty, and even today it possesses a striking elegance that urges you to return to it for just one more go. While *Space Harrier*'s premise was simple – just blast as many enemies as possible – the disconcerting speed that the game ran at took a fair while to acclimatise to. The chequerboard floor hurtled towards you at an alarming rate, which was only matched by the ferocity of *Space Harrier*'s many enemies. Add in the fact that they'd constantly fire at your last position and you found yourself continually weaving around the screen frantically trying to avoid anything that came near you. As with *Robotron* (another long-time favourite) a good session on Sega's classic left you shaken and most definitely stirred at the end of it, especially if you were strapped into one of those hydraulic cabs…


SCORE
299151
STAGE 3

RETRORATED



Due to lack of public interest few Saturn shooters ever made it to the UK. Criminal really, as many of them were superb ports of their arcade parents and were often exclusive to Sega's 32-bit console. One thing they are though is expensive, so allow Retro Gamer to point out those worth buying.

RADIANT SILVERGUN

INFORMATION

- » **PUBLISHER:** ESP
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £80 - £120
- » **RELEASED:** 1998

Whilst many will argue that Treasure's *Radiant Silvergun* doesn't quite deserve all the accolades it constantly receives, there can be no denying that it's still one of the Saturn's best shooters.

Unlike its peers, *Silvergun* immediately starts you off with a full complement of devastating weaponry that ranges from powerful forward firing shots, to a wonderful sword that can absorb enemy bullets and then release them in the form of a devastating smart bomb. It also plays like a constant boss rush, with countless huge enemies that impress you with both their outstanding attack patterns and jaw-dropping design. Treasure came up with every graphical trick in the Saturn's repertoire to deliver a shooter that looks as good as it plays. The end result is that rare title that's actually worth its constantly high asking price.

OVERALL 92%



» *Radiant Silvergun's* bosses could be an absolute pig to defeat and gave even seasoned fans of the genre plenty to worry about

SOUKYUGURENTAI

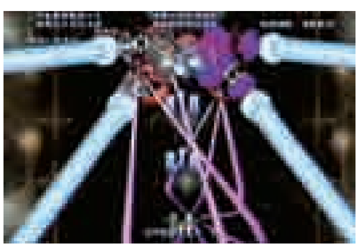
INFORMATION

- » **PUBLISHER:** ELECTRONIC ARTS
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £25 - £45
- » **RELEASED:** 1996

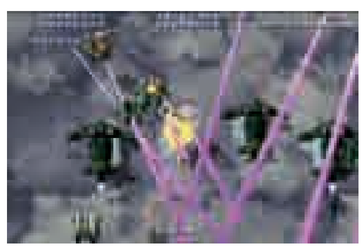
Looking for a challenge? Then allow us to recommend Raizing's wonderful *Soukyugurentai* (or *Souky* as it's more affectionately known).

Whilst the first level is fairly mundane, *Souky* quickly opens up and reveals itself to be a surprisingly complex and entertaining shooter, with its biggest asset being its superb weapon system. Holding down the fire button causes a grid to appear around your ship, which can then be used to lock onto the game's many enemies, and believe us, as you get later into the game it gets incredibly hectic. Throw in a raucous soundtrack, plenty of sprite scaling and some of the best explosions to ever grace a shoot-'em-up and the end result is one of the Saturn's most kinetic blasters.

OVERALL 93%



» *Soukyugurentai,* like many other Saturn shooters, is a superb arcade conversion that's well worth a blast



» The enemies in *Soukyugurentai* come thick and fast. Thank god you have plenty of weaponry to take them out with…



LAYER SECTION

INFORMATION

- » **PUBLISHER:** TAITO
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £10 - £20
- » **RELEASED:** 1995

In our opinion few shooters are as well-balanced as Taito's excellent *Layer Section,* and even after 11 years of intense play it constantly thrills us with its clever design.

What makes it so compelling is how well your ship's lock-on laser has been integrated into the fantastic gameplay. Thanks to *Layer Section*'s nifty pseudo-3D visuals, it's possible to lock-on to enemies that exist on different planes to your own ship. The more enemies you lock on to, the higher you can raise your score multi-player (to a maximum of x256). Combine this with the game's clever ranking system (like Garegga, it gets harder the longer you survive) and you're left with one of the best balanced shooters ever created.

OVERALL 94%



» If you don't have access to a Saturn, you'll be pleased to hear that *Layer Section* is also available on the Xbox version of Taito Legends 2 as *Rayforce*



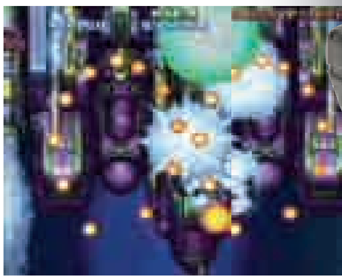
BATSUGAN

INFORMATION

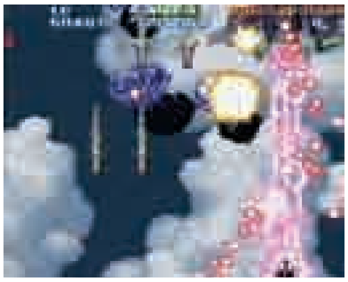
- » **PUBLISHER:** BANPRESTO
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £20 - £35
- » **RELEASED:** 1993

***Batsugan* is considered by many to be the first true 'manic shoot-'em-up'.** Unlike more traditional shooters, *Batsugan* has your ship weaving through a ridiculous amount of bullets – a task made simpler by your ship's tiny hitbox. What makes *Batsugan* impressive is that your ship is capable of returning just as much firepower. Toaplan's shooter boasts a novel power-up system that awards you experience points for every enemy you destroy. Reach 288 points and your craft will level up until its firepower reaches terrifying proportions. With Banbresto including an all-new Saturn version of the game complete with some rocking tunes it's easy to see why *Batsugan* makes our treasured list.

OVERALL 89%



» Some of the bosses in *Batsugan* are bloody gigantic and spit out massive amounts of bullets. Thank goodness your ship's hitbox is so small…



» The more you shoot, the more experience you earn, the bigger your weapons get. Lovely.

BATTLE GAREGGA

INFORMATION

- » **PUBLISHER:** ELECTRONIC ARTS
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £40 - £70
- » **RELEASED:** 1998

No your eyes aren't deceiving you, *Battle Garegga*, along with the excellent *Soukyugurentai* were published by Electronic Arts. That's not all these great titles have in common though, as both were developed by Raizing, boast superb scoring systems and are as tough as granite.

Garegga is slightly tougher to master, mainly because the more power-ups you collect, the harder the game gets (it even pays to purposely loose the odd ship here and there). It's also made difficult by the fact that many of the bullets and shrapnel can be hard to miss.



» *Battle Garegga* may take a while to get used to, but its intense gameplay is unmistakable

If you can get past these minor nuisances, *Battle Garegga* has a lot to offer – even if it does look like the ships have been cobbled together by the competitors of *Scrapyard Challenge*!

OVERALL 90%

TWINKLE STAR SPRITES

INFORMATION

- » **PUBLISHER:** ADK
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £25 - £60
- » **RELEASED:** 1997

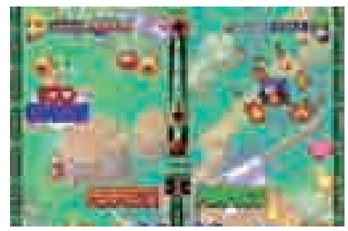
Only the Japanese could combine a shoot-'em-up with a puzzle game, and in doing so, create another superb edition to the Saturn's catalogue of great shooters.

Using a split screen, the idea behind *Twinkle Star Sprites* is simplicity itself – take down your opponent before he/she does the same to you. The game starts off like any other shooter, with your character being assailed by wave upon wave of enemies. If you manage to shoot down a wave though, the enemies will be immediately thrown into your opponents play area. Needless to say, as the action heats up the gameplay gets incredibly frantic, especially if you're lucky enough to have a friend available.

OVERALL 88%



» *Twinkle Star Sprites* has appeared on a variety of systems, including the Neo Geo, Dreamcast and PS2



» Cute, lovable visuals, bouncy tunes and well-crafted gameplay - *Twinkle Star Sprites* has it all.

STRIKERS 1945



» Big bad mechs that spit out ridiculous amounts of bullets. What more do you need in a shoot-'em-up?

INFORMATION

- » **PUBLISHER:** ATLUS
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £20 - £35
- » **RELEASED:** 1996

What could be better than a shooter set in World War II? Why, a shooter set in World War II that features giant mechs of course!

While Psykio's tribute to Capcom's *1942* series doesn't feature outrageous power-ups or complex scoring systems it still delivers thanks to its good old fashioned gameplay.

Choose from a selection of six different ships – all with their own strengths and weaknesses – and simply blow the shit out of anything that gets in your way. Upon reaching the end of each stage you face off against a huge battleship that then turns into a giant mech. It's utterly bizarre to witness but somehow works.

Don't be fooled by its non-descript looks and simple play mechanics, *Strikers 1945* is tremendous fun.

OVERALL 80%

» WATCH OUT MIDWAY, YOU HAVE COMPETITION

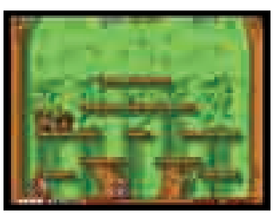
TAITO LEGENDS 2

retro GAMER SIZZLER

SO MANY GAMES, SO LITTLE TIME...



- » **SYSTEM:** XBOX
- » **PRICE:** £19.99
- » **RELEASED:** 31 MARCH
- » **PUBLISHER:** XPLOSIV
- » **DEVELOPER:** TAITO
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-4
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE FOR:** PLAYSTATION 2, PC
- » **FEATURED GAMES:** Alpine Ski, Arabian Magic, Bonze Adventure, Cameltry, Chack 'N' Pop, Cleopatra Fortune, Crazy Balloon, Darius Gaiden, Don Doko Don, Dungeon Magic, Elevator Action Returns, The Fairyland Story, Football Champ, Front Line, Gekirindan, Grid Seeker: Project Storm Hammer, Growl, Gun Frontier, Insector X, KiKi KaiKai, Kuri Kinton, Legend Of Kage, Liquid Kids, Lunar Rescue, Majestic Twelve - The Space Invaders Part IV, Metal Black, Puchi Carat, Puzzle Bobble 2, Qix, Raimais, Rastan 2, Space Invaders 95, Space Invaders DX, Violence Fight, Wild Western, Bubble Symphony, Cadash, Pop 'N' Pop, Rayforce



» **Above:** *Don Doko Don* was previously available for the NES and PC Engine, now everyone can play it



Publishers take note, if you want to tempt us with your compilations this coming Christmas you've got your work seriously cut out.

Xplosiv's *Taito Legends 2* is finally with us and delivers a stupid amount of games – 39 in fact – for a ridiculously cheap price that sets a precedent by which all future compilations will now be judged.

What makes this second compilation a must-have purchase is the fact that many of its titles never appeared in the UK (at least as far as home conversions went) and those that did make it to Japan will now cost you a pretty penny to buy from importers or eBay. *Taito Legends 2* therefore allows you to savour plenty of obscure delights without having to shell out a small fortune.

Of course, the most obvious question you'll want answered is how well the actual games are emulated. Rest assured, whilst you'll encounter the odd niggle here and there (some sound effects seem a little off and a few of the later Saturn titles don't look quite as nice as we remember them) what you have on offer is of a very high standard indeed. We hate to use the term, but those of a more 'hardcore' orientation may have a few problems with *Taito Legends 2*, mainly because it fails to offer many of the tricks that the likes of MAME supply. There's no option to use different filters or scan-lines, vertical games don't employ a TATE option (the ability to flip the games on their side, and thus keep their original aspect ratios) and you can't reconfigure any of the controls (bar adjustments to sensitivity etc).

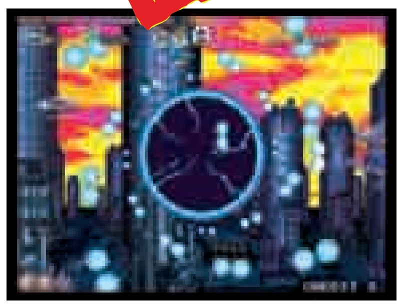
It's not all bad news though, as *Legends 2* still has plenty of options to choose from. It's possible to adjust the position of the screen, there's the useful option of keeping the original aspect ratio (although this is at the cost of big borders on the vertical games), the games run at 60 hertz and you can even have the original arcade startup mode for that added authenticity. Credits are inserted with the white button (we've tested the Xbox version), while the black is used to start each game. While it's impossible to reconfigure the buttons, most of the offered games only use a couple anyway and many are sensibly placed. Then there's the lovely presentation to consider. Each game is represented by its original arcade cab and gives you a little background info on the title in question. A few bonuses like flyers are included, and while interviews would have been nice this is still a resoundingly solid effort that perfectly captures the nostalgia of the original titles.

While the options aren't as impressive or as lovingly put together as those seen on the two PS2 Japanese *Taito* packs, what is on offer is perfectly acceptable for those that just want to play some great games – and *Taito Legends 2* is saturated in retro gaming goodness.

The pick of the bunch is surely *Elevator Action Returns*, a hellishly addictive update to the 1983 hit that features a choice of different







» There are some fantastic shooters on *Legends 2*. Those with a fishy bent may want to check out *Darius Gaiden*



» Think of *Bubble Bobble* on steroids and you'll be instantly at home with *Bubble Symphony*



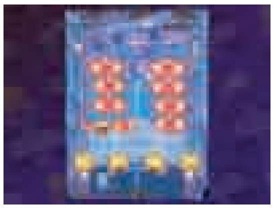
OPINION

Wow. I was impressed with *Taito Legends*, but Xplosiv has really excelled itself with this sequel. What you have here is some of the finest games that you'll have ever played (and quite a few that possibly passed you by completely). Forget those measly efforts that offer you the same old games and treat yourself to *Taito Legends 2*, you'll be sorted till Christmas.

Simon Phillips



» Whether you know it as *Puzzle Bobble 2* or *Bust-A-Move* it remains a classic puzzler



» If you're like us and find the original *Space Invaders* a little dull, *Space Invaders '95* is sure to get your juices flowing



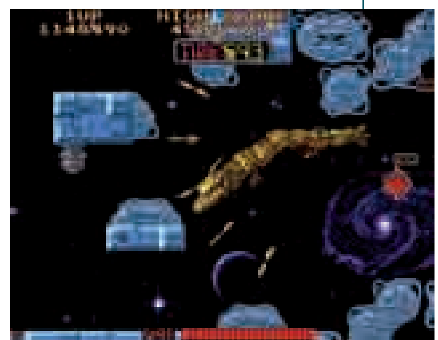
OPINION

Maybe, I'm too set in my ways, but *Taito Legends 2* didn't really click with me like the first compilation. Maybe it's because I don't recognise that many of the games on offer, or it could be that *The New Zealand Story* hasn't been included for a second time. Nevertheless, there's no question that this new compilation is fantastic value for money. Time to play some *Bubble Symphony*…

Damian Butt

ALL COMPILATIONS ARE EQUAL

BUT SOME ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS…



As we mentioned in last month's news, one of the most annoying aspects of *Taito Legends 2* has nothing to do with how well the games are emulated, or whether it could have benefited from more options. No, our biggest gripe is that Xplosiv has decided to spread 43 games across two different consoles.

While 35 of the available games can be found on both versions, each console has four exclusive titles. Xbox (and PC owners) are treated to *Cadash*, *Pop 'N' Pop*, *Rayforce* and *Bubble Symphony*, whilst PlayStation 2 owners get to play *G-Darius*, *Balloon Bomber*, *Ray Storm* and *Syvalion*. This means that you'll have to buy both the PS2 and Xbox versions if you want the complete set of games. Let's hope we don't see repeats of this in the future.



» Don't own a Saturn or a PC Engine? Worry not as *Liquid Kids* is now available in a far more accessible form



characters, some beautifully animated sprites and the sort of frenetic gunplay that wouldn't look out of place in a John Woo flick. Add in the fact that the Saturn version normally sells for around £60 and you've already achieved fantastic value for money and there are still another 38 games! Those with an interest in shoot-'em-ups would do well to check out the amazing *Rayforce*. While it looks slightly rougher than the Saturn version we have in the office (we sadly can't afford the arcade version) there's no denying that the all-important gameplay has remained intact. Other shooters worthy of note include *Darius Gaiden*, *Grid Seeker*, *Metal Black* and *Space Invaders '95*.

If you're more of a platform fanatic then you're really spoilt for choice. *Don Doko Don* is a superb little title in the style of *Bubble Bobble*, but switches bubble blowing for hammer bashing, while *Bubble Symphony* is a glorious update to *Bubble Bobble* that features two extra dinosaurs, greatly enhanced visuals and plenty of extra power-ups. Our pick of the bunch though is the delightful *Liquid Kids* (which was only previously available on the PC Engine and Sega Saturn). It's a great little scrolling platformer and will instantly appeal to fans of *Rainbow Islands* and the aforementioned *Bubble Bobble*. Other highlights of *Taito Legends 2* include *Qix*, *Cameltry*, *Cleopatra Fortune*, *Puchi Caret* (a bizarre cross between *Arkanoid* and *Puzzle Bobble*), *Football Champ*, *Crazy Balloon* and *KiKi KaiKai*, but to be fair, there's more than enough stuff here to appeal to even the most fussy gamer.

And that's *Taito Legends 2*'s greatest strength. Even if you forget the frustrating lack of options, the odd missing (or incorrect) sound effect and its Japanese-centric games, this is still one of the greatest compilations that we've ever played. Good luck to anyone hoping to top this little beauty, you're seriously going to need it.

IN SUMMARY

Yes there are a few little niggles, but to be honest, they don't detract from what's easily the best value for money compilation we've ever seen. Pick up *Taito Legends 2* today; it's easily the best £19.99 you'll ever spend.

RATING **95%**

RETRORATED

» THE BEAUTIFUL JOURNEY JUST KEEPS ON GIVING

OUTRUN 2006: COAST 2 COAST

RUNNING DOWN A DREAM



- » **SYSTEM:** PLAYSTATION 2
- » **PRICE:** £39.99
- » **RELEASED:** 31 MARCH
- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **DEVELOPER:** SUMO DIGITAL
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-6
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE FOR:** PSP, XBOX, PC

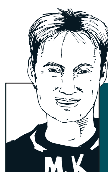


When titles like *OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast* come along they make us glad to be gamers. Call it soul, call it magic, call it whatever the hell you like, but whatever it is, *Coast 2 Coast* is not only lovingly drenched in it, it makes us proud that even as mature (ish) 30-year-olds we can still be totally entranced in the joys of gaming. Indeed, if we could bottle the special something that Sumo Digital has captured in *Coast 2 Coast* we'd be millionaires, as speeding through the gloriously designed tracks is the stuff dreams are made of. From the moment 'that' music starts up and the sun's light bounces of your beautifully modelled car you're hooked, and after that there's no going back. What you have here is essentially three games in one, as *Coast 2 Coast* features both the original *OutRun 2* arcade game (with the odd graphical tweak here and there), its vastly superior sequel, Special Tours and new mission mode *Coast 2 Coast*. In all you've got 30 different locations to race through and each and every one of them is a sight to behold. From the rustic calm of National Park, to the gaudy opulence of Casino Town you'll be constantly amazed by this stunning port. Oh, and wait until you encounter the Milky Way for the first time, it will take your breath away.

Gameplay is king though, and, like *OutRun 2* before it, *Coast 2 Coast* is a joy to play. Realising that you may want a little more from your game than just the *OutRun*, Heart Attack and Time Trial modes, Sumo has also included in *Coast To Coast* a new mission section that's a huge improvement on *OutRun 2*'s. Tasks are more varied and balanced, while unlocking items is a lot more straightforward (every race earns you mileage, which can be used to buy new items like cars, tracks and soundtracks). All in all, this is a massive improvement over the already fantastic *OutRun 2* and deserves to be in everyone's collection.



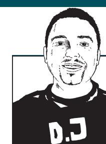
» The slipstream feature is just one of the new additions that appeared in *OutRun 2: Special Tours*



OPINION

This is what racing is all about. The music (which contains plenty of new tracks) is as good as ever, the visuals, absolutely mouth-watering and the gameplay has been honed to perfection. Sumo Digital has created an amazing conversion that is practically identical to the original arcade game. Add in a selection of great extras and *Coast 2 Coast* really is something to shout about.

Mark Kendrick



OPINION

Some may scoff at the lack of cars and tracks, but they'll be missing the point, as this isn't what *Coast 2 Coast* is about. What you have here is 30 amazingly designed courses that will have you racing through them again and again and again. Sumo Digital has once again pulled off the unbelievable and crammed a state-of -the-art arcade machine (and then some) into your humble PS2. Brilliant.

Darran Jones

IN SUMMARY

Sumo Digital has done it again. *OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast* takes everything that makes the franchise so enjoyable to play and cranks its up to 11. Whether you're a fan of the original game or just love solid racers, *Coast 2 Coast* is essential.

RATING 96%





» The locations in Coast 2 Coast are so good that you'll want to live there, we do



» Even UK:Resistance would be impressed with this dynamic screenshot…

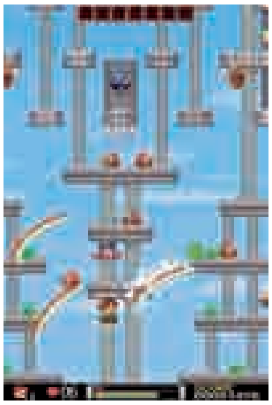
eMag

RETRORATED

» NO GOLD AT THE END OF THIS RAINBOW

RAINBOW ISLANDS REVOLUTION

ONE REVOLUTION TOO MANY…



» **SYSTEM:** NINTENDO DS
» **PRICE:** £29.99
» **RELEASED:** APRIL
» **PUBLISHER:** RISING STAR GAMES
» **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
» **PLAYERS:** 1



» It may look like *Rainbow Islands*, but it sure doesn't play like it

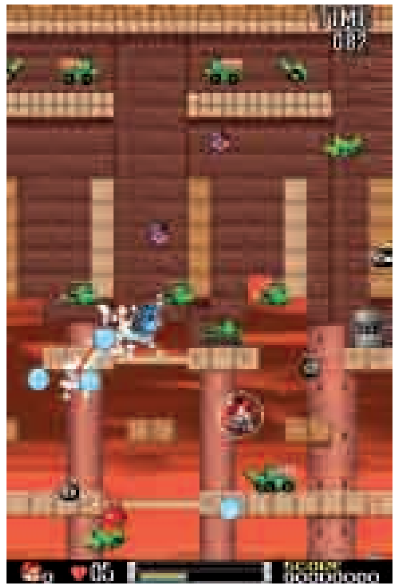


We really want to love *Rainbow Islands Revolution.* The original game is considered a masterpiece in games design and remains a firm favourite with platform fans everywhere. Now that we've played this latest version, we're not too sure if the direction Rising Star games has taken was the correct path.

While you still have to reach the top of each stage, the way in which you progress has greatly altered. It may look and sound (well, sort of sound) similar to the 1987 original but that's as far as the comparisons go. Bar the cute characters, *Rainbow Islands Revolution* actually has more in common with the DS's *Catch! Touch! Yoshi!*, albeit with poorer play mechanics and less responsive controls. Your stylus is used to draw rainbow coloured lines, which will then fall after you've tapped them. Any enemies which immediately come into contact with the fallen lines are instantly destroyed. Deeper play mechanics are introduced by drawing triangles, which attract any nearby enemies, and circles, which will turn any trapped foes into crystals. While you're clearing the screen of nearby monsters, you also have your trapped hero to consider. He's confined in a bubble and by moving him out of harms way he'll eventually reach the top of each stage.



» As more enemies start appearing it becomes increasingly difficult due to the clumsy controls





OPINION

Ever since *Rainbow Islands Revolution* was announced I've had doubts, and it's sad to see that I was actually right. If this had the precise controls of *Catch! Touch! Yoshi!* it would be a breeze to play, but you spend far too much time trying to draw objects that never appear on screen. The *Bubble Bobble* series has always relied on its charming simplicity, and *Rainbow Islands Revolution* falls far short. One to avoid.

Simon Phillips



OPINION

I quite like this. It's certainly tricky to get to grips with, but perseverance does start to pay off. The included Time Attack mode offers a lot of fun, and while the original *Rainbow Islands* isn't included there are still a few extras to unlock. It does feel like it's simply trading off a classic franchise, but if you want to try something different *Rainbow Islands Revolution* won't disappoint.

Damian Butt

While the above is fine in principal, it's spoiled by a few key factors. The biggest issue is that drawing triangles and circles (the key to taking out multiple enemies and scoring big points) is somewhat hit and miss. Then you have the fact that your on-screen character can take an age to respond to your stylus input, which often results in quick and unnecessary deaths. Very frustrating. Ultimately though, *Rainbow Islands Revolution* requires you to do far too much, which wouldn't be an issue if the controls were up to the task. Oh and where's the original game?

A round of applause to Rising Star Games for trying something new but put some solid gameplay in there next time.

IN SUMMARY

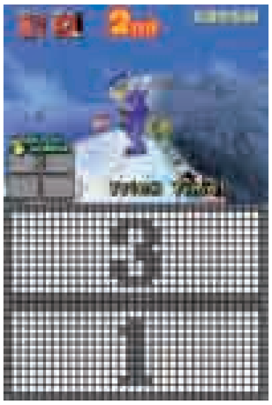
A decent idea marred by some frustrating and dodgy gameplay mechanics. It's a brave stab at taking the *Rainbow Island* franchise in a new direction, but it could have been much better.

RATING **51%**

eMag

SBK: SNOWBOARD KIDS DS

THERE'S NO BUSINESS LIKE SNOW BUSINESS



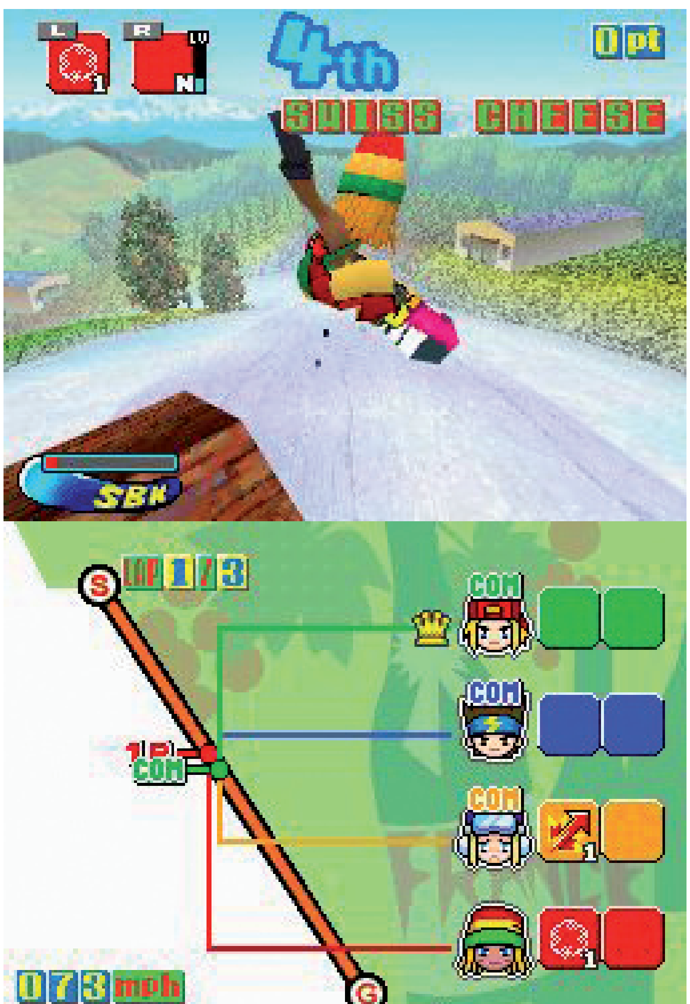
- **SYSTEM:** NINTENDO DS
- **PRICE:** £29.99
- **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- **PUBLISHER:** RISING STAR GAMES
- **DEVELOPER:** ATLUS
- **PLAYERS:** 1-4



Like the very snow-covered mountains you race on, playing *Snowboard Kids DS* is a series of ups and downs that will have you whooping with joy one moment and swearing with frustration the next.

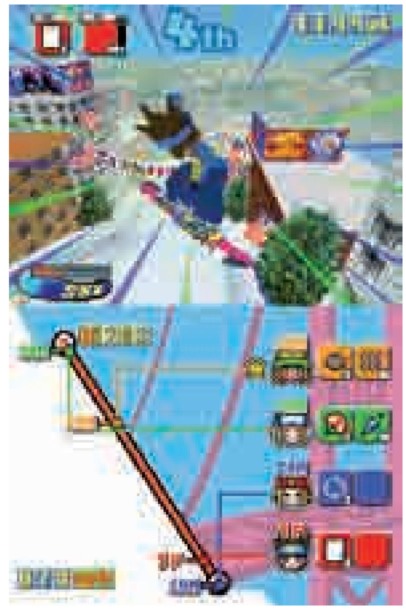
For those unaware of the series' heritage, *Snowboard Kids DS* effectively plays like the *Mario Kart* games and features plenty of multi-player mayhem as the characters race down the snowy slopes. That's where the similarities end though, for while *Snowboard Kids DS* can be great fun, it's pulled down a few notches by some extremely frustrating gameplay mechanics.

Take the touch screen for example. While being able to press it in certain places (or for a set number of times) allows you to pull off some very impressive stunts, you're given such a tiny amount of time that your boarder often crashes into the ground because your fingers weren't nimble enough. Very frustrating. Then there are the unfair power-ups that hinder you at the most inopportune moments and require luck, rather than actual skill to avoid.





» The tricks certainly look very impressive – if only they were easier to execute…



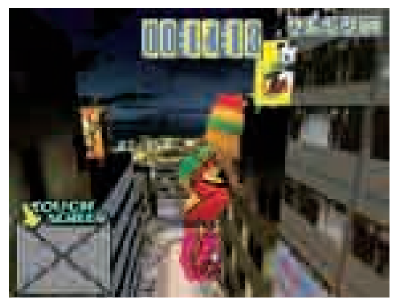
» The bottom screen shows you which boarder has which weapon, handy if you could actually avoid most of them…



OPINION

Whilst *Snowboard Kids DS* is a fairly competent racer, I can't help but feel that more could have been made of it. Racing against the computer seems to require more luck than any real skill, whereas the stupid risk factor for pulling off special moves makes the touch screen rather redundant. Stick with *Mario Kart DS*.

Dan Curley



» Tapping the screen may sound easy, but it's a lot harder when you're racing down a slope

The power-ups lack the subtly of *Mario Kart DS*'s system and soon make the matches – multi-player or otherwise – a real chore to race through.

A pity really, as *SBK* still features plenty of appeal. There's a nice selection of un-lockables to discover, a fun Slalom and Boss mode and plenty of other secrets. If only the main draw of the game wasn't so frustrating to play.

IN SUMMARY

Snowboard Kids DS has some nice ideas but they're not enough to save it from coming across as a substandard *Mario Kart DS* clone. Stick with the big *M* instead; you know it makes sense.

RATING **70%**



OPINION

I'm really enjoying this. All right, so the power-ups can be a pain in the arse sometimes, but the game has oodles of character and lots of nice touches (shouting into the mic to wake your boarder up for example). Forget these other two miserable gits and give *SBK* a whirl. You'll be glad you did.

Simon Phillips



» The Slalom is one of the most enjoyable sections of the game and full of replay value

eMag



SUPER GHOULS 'N' GHOSTS

A HARD DAY'S KNIGHT

- » **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM
- » **RELEASED:** 1992
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORMER
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** SNES
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £8+



HISTORY

Let's get one thing out of the way right now: Capcom's *Super Ghouls 'N' Ghosts* is tough. In fact, if I'm brutally honest it's one of the most bastard-hard platformers I've ever had to battle through and I've played *Bionic Commandos*!

Despite the game's incredibly harsh difficulty settings I just had to have it in my collection, if only because it enabled me to stick two fingers up at my Mega Drive owning mates. For you see, while the Mega Drive had already been treated to a very striking conversion of Capcom's 1988 arcade hit, lucky SNES owners ended up with a title that simply blew its rival away – it made the two-year wait totally worth it.

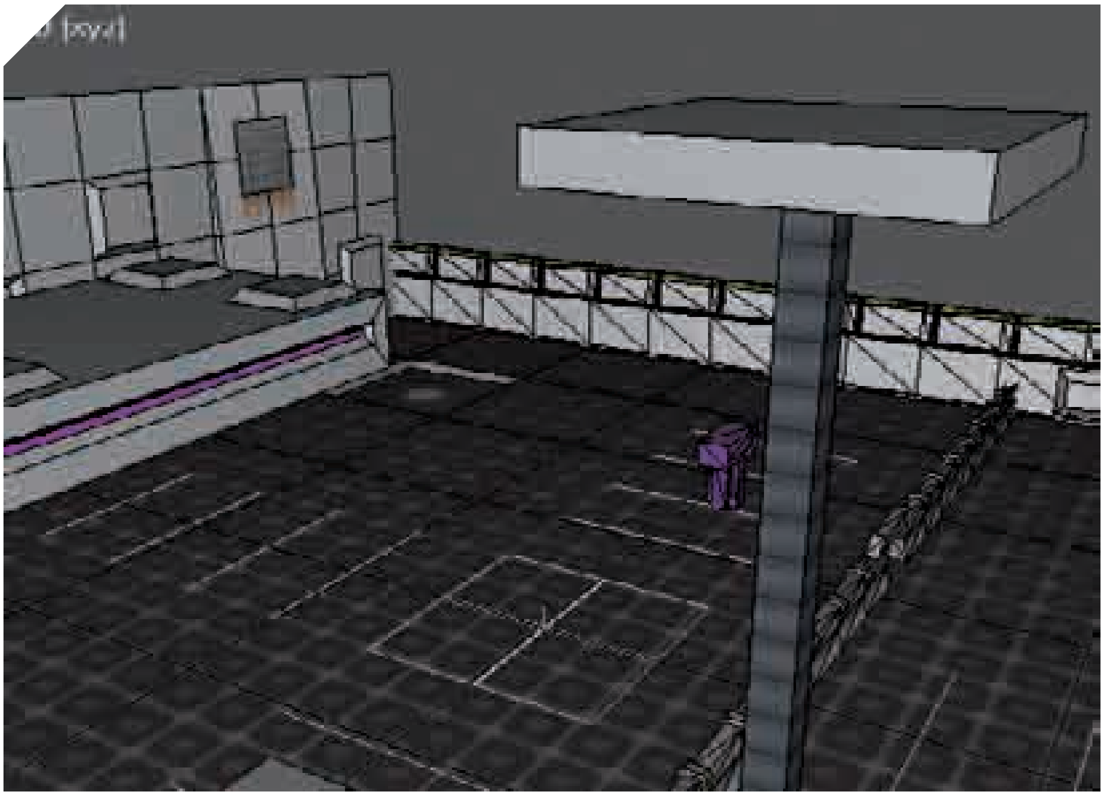
The most obvious improvement to *Super Ghouls 'N' Ghosts* was how much better the game looked and sounded when compared to its Mega Drive peer. Beautifully defined sprites, huge articulated bosses, rousing orchestral scores and stunningly designed environments all helped to convince SNES owners that they'd made the right choice with their new console. No gamer will forget the first time they scampered through the first stage's ghoulish graveyard, only to find themselves faced with a gigantic flying eagle at its end. Loosely based on the first level ogre from the arcade and Mega Drive versions, the demented bird spat out eggs (which in turn hatched into little eaglets) or simply stretched out its long neck – a direct mimic of the ogre's attack – in order to hit you with its wicked beak.

While *Ghosts*' levels were typical of the platform locations that existed in a multitude of other similar titles they still managed to flourish thanks to their remarkable attention to detail and many memorable bosses. The end result was a game that far exceeded the high quality that had been set by its original arcade parent, and remains a first-rate example of how to create a great (but god awfully tough) platformer. Roll on *Ultimate Ghouls 'N' Ghosts* for the PSP.


2 : 48

RETRO SCENE

WE TAKE A LOOK AT SOME OF THE FANTASTIC REMAKES THAT WILL BE HEADING YOUR WAY IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS



OVINE BY DESIGN REVEAL ITS NEW DRILLER REMAKE

DRILLER THRILLER





» There's still a lot of work to do, but Ovine by Design's Driller remake is looking very impressive

Crikey, it's all go on the remake scene at the moment, with a host of promising titles on the way.

With the (much deserved) success of its excellent *Total Eclipse* remake, the lads at Ovine by Design are now hard at work on their follow-up project *Driller*. As mentioned in last month's interview with Trevor Storey (or Smila as he's better known) Ovine by Design (made up of Stuart Collier and Andy Hewitt) were waiting to see what the response to *Total Eclipse* would be like before they decided to go ahead with *Driller*.

It's still a fair way from being finished yet, but Andy Hewitt was more than happy to stop by for a quick chat and even provided us with some work in progress screenshots so you can see how *Driller* is coming along. After playing through *Total Eclipse*, we were more than interested to see what changes the lads would be making to the remake.

"The original *Driller* had quite a number of puzzles and it would take you some time to drill all 17 platforms, but as a remake we're implementing a number of improvements and new zones," explains Hewitt. "For example, we plan to bring a purpose to the surface of the moon instead of only being your final resting place. We're also going to be adding a number of secrets, double the locations and sub-missions – not dissimilar to our treatment of *Total Eclipse*. We're hoping to finish it off in the next couple of months providing all goes well."

With *Driller* in the works and *Total Eclipse* completed, readers will no doubt want to know if Ovine will be visiting the rest of the Freescape titles, but Hewitt is determined to keep everyone guessing. "Yes, we've had plenty of requests for both *Castle Master* and *Dark Side*, but we'll need to get *Driller* done-and-dusted first. Then we can think about the others."

ATTACK OF THE CLONES

HERE'S A QUICK ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST REMAKES COMING YOUR WAY

The home-brew scene is healthier than ever and there's a wealth of great remakes on the way for both PCs and Macs.

We've already mentioned *Driller*, but if you're looking for more Freescape action, then why not keep an eye on *The Castle*? Created by danjo of Acoders.com, *The Castle* is basically an all-new update of *Castle Master* but will be featuring plenty of new gameplay elements. The most notable difference is that rather than pelting your enemies with rocks you can now swipe at them with a sword. *The Castle* will also use a free-roaming graphics engine, so as to keep it apart from the Freescape remakes that Ovine is currently working on. Danjo hasn't given any indication yet as to when *The Castle* will be finished, but we're hoping that it will be available later this year.

Another title we're looking forward to is Dean Swain's remake of *Target Renegade*. This actual remake has been in development for what seems an eternity now, but after a series of problems, Swain has finally found a talented programmer in the guise of Harvard Spring. Swain has already finished creating all the sprites for the game and Spring is currently hard at work on the actual coding. A current demo is available at http://www.havsoft.co.uk/Target%20Renegade.htm – there's still a lot of work to be done, but the game is showing plenty of promise.

Finally, nzo, creator of a brand new *Robotron 2084* remake has hit a bit of a snag. The game is getting close to completion now, but he needs someone to help work on the game's sprites due to his original graphics artist having to leave the project. The remake is already looking mighty fine and features a strong, vibrant style. If you think you can help out then contact us at the usual address and we'll pass your details on.



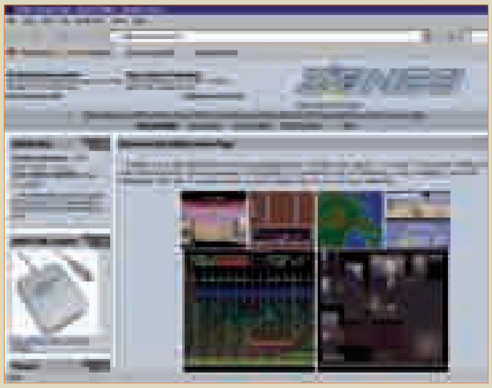
» *The Castle* is already looking pretty special. We'll be following this one rather closely…

EMULATE THIS

EVERY MONTH RETRO GAMER WILL BE GIVING YOU A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO THE WORLD OF EMULATION. TO TIE IN WITH OUR FEATURED MACHINE, THIS MONTH WE'RE LOOKING AT NINTENDO'S SNES

ZSNES

ZSnes is easily the best SNES emulator that's currently available. We asked our emulator guru to give us a quick start-up guide. So without further ado…



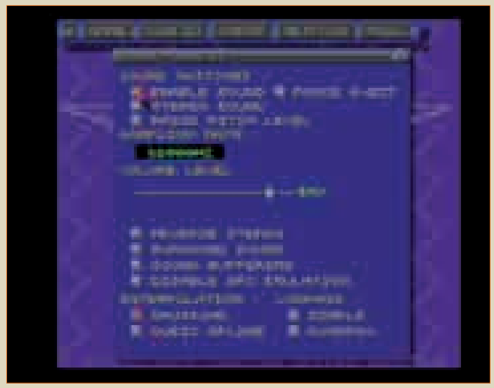
STEP 1 Firstly, point your browser in the direction of www.zsnes.com and download the relevant files to your computer. There's a version for DOS, Windows and Linux. We'll be dealing with the DOS version here as it forms the foundations for the other formats already mentioned. Once you've downloaded it, unzip it to your computer and get some ROM images to try – www.pdroms.de is a good start. Place the ROM images in the same directory as your emulator for convenience.



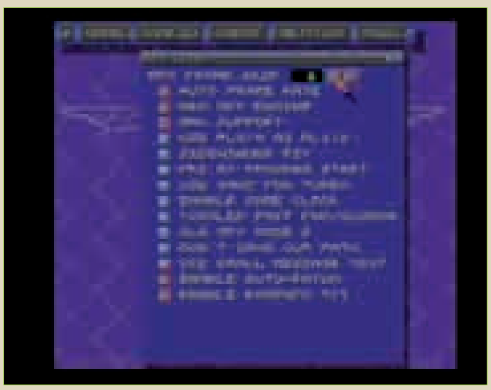
STEP 2 Navigate your system to where you've put the emulator (C:\emulator\zsnes\ for instance). Once there, double-click on the icon called 'zsnes.exe' (or type in zsnes and press enter if you're in DOS or a command prompt). Momentarily, the emulator will start up with a blank screen and some pull-down menus. Use the mouse and click 'LOAD' on the 'GAME' menu. This will bring up a dialogue box of the game images that you have downloaded. These files are determined by the .smc file extension. One double-click on the game that you want and it'll load in no time.



STEP 3 Now your game's loaded, configure the controls: press 'ESC' and click on the 'CONFIG' menu, then click on 'INPUT #1'. A dialogue box will appear with 'INPUT DEVICE'. You may calibrate your joystick, or set up keyboard controls. Highlight the input type you need, then click on 'SET'. You can then set the keys. Then click on the X in the right-hand corner of the dialogue box. Press 'ESC' again to return to the emulator. Additional player controls can be set by selecting 'INPUT #x' (2, 3 or 4 etc..) under the 'CONFIG' menu and repeating the process as appropriate.



STEP 4 If you find that you have no sound, press the 'ESC' key to bring up the menus. Under the 'CONFIG' menu is 'SOUND'. Click 'SOUND' and a dialogue box will appear. You may find that sound is disabled by default. Click the box next to 'ENABLE SOUND'. An orange tick will appear. Close the dialogue box (the X in the top right-hand corner of it) and press 'ESC' to return to the main emulator. If there is still no sound, repeat the process but click the box next to 'STEREO SOUND' instead of 'ENABLE SOUND' to switch off stereo and return to the emulator again.



STEP 5 If your game is playing slowly increase the performance of the emulator by altering the maximum number of frames that the software will skip during operation: go to the 'CONFIG' menu and click 'OPTIONS'. Change the maximum number of frame skips. No frame skips means that your computer has no problem running the games at the correct speed or faster, or you can have a maximum number of nine frame skips which will mean your computer can spend more time emulating the hardware and running the game instead of updating the screen.



STEP 6 ZSnes allows you to save your game to the point. To do this, press F3 and a dialogue box will appear. ZSnes allows ten different states to be saved, but will always default to state zero on start up. Use the arrow keys to select the state number that you want and press enter. This will automatically over-write any game states that already exist in that entry. To save the game at that point, press F2 and to load it back later, press F4. This is extremely handy if you want to freeze the game just before that end-level boss you've been trying to topple.



STEP 7 ZSnes allows you to toggle on and off certain features of the emulated hardware. Respectively, these disable or enable the background layered graphics (keys 1 - 4) and the sprites (on key 5). Key 7 selects between mouse in port one or two, enable Super Scope emulation, enable Lethal Enforcer Gun emulation and disable these virtual devices, key 8 will toggle on or off 'New GFX engine', key 9 will toggle 'Windowing' and key 0 will toggle 'Offset mode'. To restore the emulator's defaults, press key 6 at any time.



STEP 8 You're able to add cheat codes for cheating delights. Currently, ZSnes supports Game Genie, Pro Action Replay, and GoldFinger codes. This works by patching the ROM image to include the cheat code that you type in to the dialogue box as appropriate. The patch is saved to your computer. It might be necessary to reset the emulator under the 'GAME' menu to get the cheat code to work. The documentation suggests that if the cheat code doesn't work first time, try the same game code but for a different cheat system.

RETRO SCENE

Remake of the Mouth

EVERY MONTH RETRO GAMER WILL REVEAL A CLASSIC HOME-BREW TITLE. THIS MONTH IT'S A SUPERB REMAKE OF CAPCOM'S GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS

ON A QUEST TO RESCUE A PRINCESS

GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS V0.4

Ghosts 'N Goblins is a Capcom classic; first gracing the arcades back in 1985, it was swiftly ported to the popular home computers of the day. On starting this remake, you're greeted with a mock Amstrad CPC screen, a nice touch, though the game itself is based on the arcade original and not the CPC version.

» Cold? Me? Nah… I always rescue Princesses in my underpants





- » **FORMAT:** WINDOWS
- » **RELEASE DATE:** 2004
- » **DEVELOPED BY:** STEVE REVILL
- » **LINK:** WWW.REMAKES.ORG
- » **REVIEWED BY:** SHAUN BEBBINGTON

Starting in the familiar fashion, our hero King Arthur stands on the outskirts of Lucifer's evil lair in which a princess is being held captive. Bravely, you edge into his domain in a truly valiant rescue attempt. As you do, Lucifer's many minions of zombies, ghouls and other such unsavoury types are out to stop you. Luckily, you're armed with a lance to start with, which will take out most of your foes with one hit. This can be upgraded by collecting the other weapons throughout the game, which can make progression slightly easier at certain parts of it. One hit from any of your antagonists will cause your armour to shatter; being the hero that you obviously are though, you don't mind running around in your underwear… there's a Princess to rescue, after all. Though one more hit will cause loss of life and will reduce Arthur to a pile of bones.

Everything from the original is here: traversing through the game increases its difficulty as you go (as you might expect) until the difficulty curve becomes more of a vertical wall than anything else. Steve Revill has done a superb job with this nifty remake, although you can tell where the music loops as it stops dead before starting again. Other than this, we'd thoroughly recommend adding this game to your collection.

RATING **89%**

TWO-MINUTE PROFILE

JAKOB VOOS

IN 1997, A GROUP OF PROGRAMMERS FRUSTRATED WITH THE LACK OF SUPPORT FOR THE COMMODORE 64 GOT TOGETHER TO FORM THE GROUP PROTOVISION TO MAKE SOFTWARE FOR THE AGEING MACHINE. WE TALK TO JAKOB VOOS TO DISCUSS COMMERCIAL SOFTWARE IN A NON-COMMERCIAL AGE.

With the Commodore 64 being the best selling 8-bit home computer in history, it's still to this day bound to have a huge fan-base, and when a group of C64 fans get together, anything can happen, like starting up a software label. And so, Protovision was born, run by enthusiasts, for enthusiasts. As Voos explains, "We're a bunch of hobby enthusiasts who develop and distribute entertainment software and other hardware for the good old C64 – a very efficient computer for its time. Today, a computer is considered quick because it has resources. We consider a computer quick that uses its resources in a proficient manner."

Protovision have produced some ground-breaking games during the last nine years, and some are regarded in high esteem by many C64 home-brew gamers, "We have brought a number of popular game titles to the C64 public, including *Bomb Mania* (a 4-player enabled *Bomberman* clone with nifty extras) and *Metal Dust* (the first game to require a SuperCPU accelerator.)" *Bomb Mania* is Protovision's best-selling in-house game, and its first commercial release. But it's not done for financial considerations. "It's not possible to turn PTV into a real money maker. The question is rather if we should tell anyone about that, because sometimes people don't like it when they read we are non-profit making and just want to provide a quality produce and cover our expenses. That's why we say we're commercial, people don't bother to complain."



» *Bomb Mania* is the ideal party game as it can be played by four people at once



» The world's first SuperCPU-specific game: *Metal Dust*

So what does the future hold for this nine-year-old venture? Will it continue past the C64's 25th anniversary? "The future holds many more game releases. Many of our developments are at the brink of completion. And although we sell games to emulator users, and we are happy about every emulator user who cares enough to support active game development, our primary goal was and is to support the actual machine." It's something they do well, and with several games lined up for this year, you'll want to bookmark www.protovision-online.de, won't you?

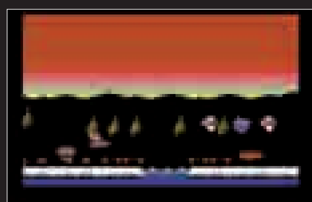
HOME-BREW RATED

Home-brew, love it or hate it, you can't deny that it's becoming an important part of the retro scene. This month we take a look at *Ice Guys* and *The Slarti and Stash Space Saga* for the C64

CHILL OUT AND SAVE THE WORLD

ICE GUYS





- » **FORMAT:** COMMODORE 64
- » **RELEASE DATE:** 1997
- » **DEVELOPED BY:** KNIGHTS OF BYTES
- » **PUBLISHER:** PROTOVISION
- » **PRICE:** €23
- » **REVIEWED BY:** SHAUN BEBBINGTON

Climate change can have unusual effects on the world's weather, as most people will probably know already, and this man-made phenomenon has caused a particularly bitter winter across much of Europe. Seizing on an opportunity, mutant monsters have been kidnapping snowmen for their own malevolent purposes. With this knowledge, two retired Antarctic researchers set out to rescue and free the captured snowmen, taking them on a snowy adventure from Europe to the Antarctic.

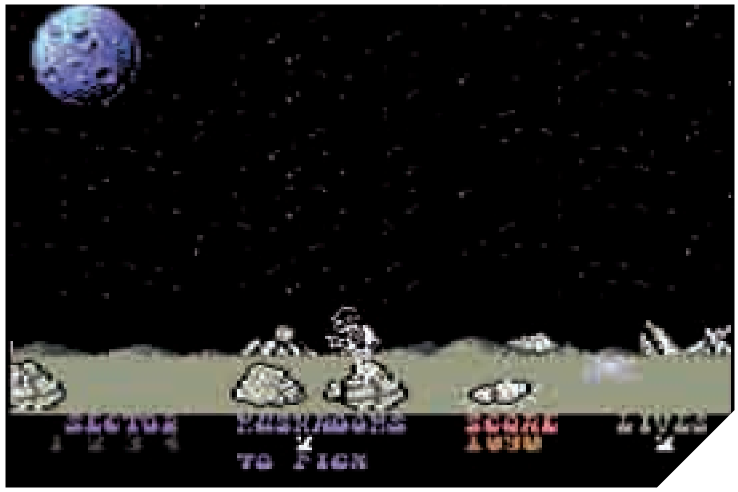
The game is a screen-by-screen platform affair, not dissimilar to the arcade game *Snow Bros*. The evil mutants patrol each level, and can be dispatched by throwing snowballs at them – eventually this will encapsulate them in a snowball which can be rolled to take out other foes, or your co-player or your own player if you're not careful, eventually exiting the screen at the bottom. Collectables appear in each level to aid progression, and every so often a portal appears which will take you to a shop to buy a single-use weapon. There's a really nice scrolling sub-game in which you (and your co-player if present) race along in bobsleds to collect more bonuses that can add extra lives. As the difficulty curve continues upwards faster than a rocket, mastering this sub-game is an essential part to the proceedings.

Initially, you may find *Ice Guys* a little tricky and even after many attempts you will need your wits about you to continue with minimal loss of life. It is a very polished piece of code, with some excellent digitised SID samples and music, and nice colourful graphics. *Ice Guys* takes some getting used to at first, due to it being a little on the tough side, with a second player throwing up as many challenges as rewards, but stick with it and you've got a great classic game, one of Protovision's earliest and most under-rated games to date.

RATING **87%**

» Spend your pocket money wisely





» This game ranks along some of the worst gaming disasters in history

IN THIS SPACE, NO ONE HEARS YOU SCREAM...

THE SLARTI AND STASH SPACE SAGA



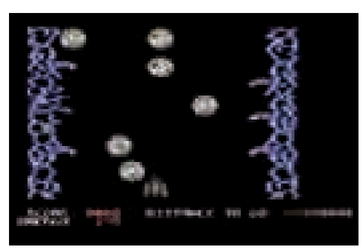
- » **FORMAT:** COMMODORE 64 OR EMULATOR
- » **RELEASE DATE:** MARCH 2006
- » **DEVELOPED BY:** CROOKED RASTER PRODUCTIONS
- » **PUBLISHER:** SELF PUBLISHED
- » **PRICE:** FREE (DOWNLOAD)
- » **REVIEWED BY:** DAVE JOHNSTONE

Some time in the future, society turns against all recreational drug users with draconian measures, sending those found guilty or even suspected of drug usage into space to fend for themselves and to make their own lives. Step forward Slarti and Stash, accused of drug use due to unfounded rumours. Without a proper defence for their trail into the allegations, both of our heroes are sent into space to find a new planet to call home.

The first task is to fly through an asteroid storm, and then it's down to kill some Skeletor-inspired monster, and then it's time to reset your computer as you ponder why you've just spent that time playing this, with the realisation that you will actually never get any of it back. Unfortunately, *Space Saga* looks and feels very much like an unfinished piece of work rushed out into the public domain for the wrong reasons. That would be all-well-and-good if there was anything like a game here, but there clearly isn't. There's also the glaring fact that this game has more bugs in it than the movie *Starship Troopers*, and could be likened to games written in the very early days of the Commodore 64, some 23 years ago. In fact, the last game we saw that was this bad was *World Cup Carnival: Mexico '86* by US Gold.

Usually, home-brew software is good quality, due to the fact that there are so many online tutorials about programming the C64 and that the machine is so well known amongst the home-brew community. The hardware also makes games like this fairly easy to do, so going wrong can't be forgiven, and the fact that it's free doesn't count for anything. If you want to be reminded of all of those gaming disasters of yesteryear, give this a try. Otherwise, avoid like the plague.

RATING **9%**



» You could download this new game for free… but why waste the bandwidth usage on your Internet connection and Hard Drive space?

BARGAIN HUNT

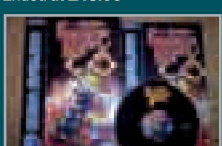
HUNT DOWN BARGAINS OR JUST DRINK UP THE LOVELINESS OF ALL THIS RETRO GOODNESS. FEAST YOUR EYES ON SIX PAGES OF ALL THE VERY BEST THAT RETRO GAMING HAS TO OFFER…

Collecting retro games can be great fun, but you need to have a rough idea how much it's going to cost you. So here for your buying pleasure is a Retro Gamer buyer's guide. Where possible we have endeavoured to list the earliest international launch date, be it Asia, America or Europe. Prices were compiled from a variety of sources, including eBay, Japan auctions, car boot sales, traders and general consensus. Foreign items will often be cheaper in their local country, so regional differences should be considered. Also, bear in mind that online items will often be cheaper than you will find in specialist stores. If you see an item selling for far less, good for you! We aim to help with finding those bargains, but if you see an item sold for much higher make sure you really want to purchase it. Prices fluctuate and the market sways, so there can never be a concrete listing. Bear in mind that something is worth as much as someone else is willing to pay. No one is perfect though, and we will openly admit that with over 100 different systems to list, mistakes can happen. If you spot a glaring error in our listings, please drop us an email at retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk and let us know about it!

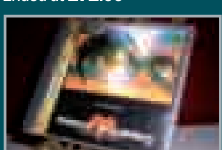
RETRO AUCTION WATCH

Retro Gamer will be sifting through countless pages of eBay and reporting on any items of interest (hardware and software) that have caught our eye. If something has sold for a staggeringly high amount of money (or lower than it normally would) you'll find them listed here.

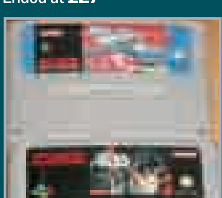
GUARDIAN HEROES
Sega Saturn
Normally sells for **£30 +**
Ended at **£16.00**



RADIANT SILVERGUN
Sega Saturn
Normally sells for **£100+**
Ended at **£72.00**



ROCK 'N' ROLL RACING AND SUPER STAR WARS
SNES (unboxed)
Normally sells for **£8 +**
Ended at **£27**



3DO



3DO GOLDSTAR
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£45 - £60**

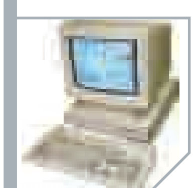


PANASONIC FZ-1 (FRONT LOADER)
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 - £60**

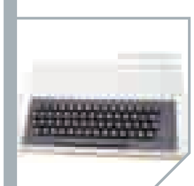


PANASONIC FZ-10 (TOP LOADER)
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 - £35**
While 3DO systems had much potential, there wasn't enough software support and it eventually stopped production. There were still some great games released!
- STAR CONTROL 2
- RETURN FIRE
- CRASH AND BURN

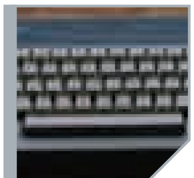
ACORN



ARCHIMEDES
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 (with games)**
Early RISC-based home computer, quite powerful at the time.
- VIRUS (STRIPPED DOWN VERSION OF ZARCH)



ATOM
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50**
Extremely old home computer by Acorn that's now hard to find.



ACORN ELECTRON
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10**
Budget version of the BBC home computer (below).



BBC MICRO
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15**
A classic British home computer, and quite popular. Affectionately known as 'the Beeb'.
- EXILE
- ELITE
- WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST

AMSTRAD



CPC 464
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 - £25**
Early classic 8-bit home computer from Amstrad, designed to compete against the C64 and ZX Spectrum. This early model has a built in cassette tape deck. Beware the models that come with a green screen monitor!



CPC 664
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 - £25**
Like the 464, except with a floppy disk drive. A short-lived model that was soon replaced by the superior 6128.



CPC 6128
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25+**
Improved model which doubled the RAM of previous iterations. Later 'Plus' models came with a cartridge port.
- RENEGADE
- RICK DANGEROUS
- GRYZOR



GX4000
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50-£70**
Console version of the CPC Plus range, came with joypads. Limited range of games.
- BURNIN' RUBBER
- PANG
- SWITCHBLADE

APPLE



APPLE II
» YEAR **1977**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ (with games)**
Like many early computers the Apple II was hand-built machine and sold to enthusiasts.
- KARATEKA
- ULTIMA IV
- LODE RUNNER

ATARI



400/800/600XL/XE
» YEAR **1979**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+**
Series of old 8-bit Atari home computers.
- DROP ZONE
- THRUST
- ZYBEX



2600 (VCS)
» YEAR **1977**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 - £30**
Earliest console by Atari. Various models, many with the classic wood panelling effect. Many UK gamers had their first taste of videogames on this.
- PITFALL
- ADVENTURE
- COSMIC ARK

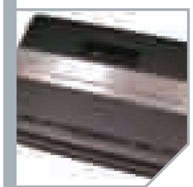
RARITY GUIDE

- ROCKING HORSE SHIT
- HEN'S TEETH
- LUCKY FIND
- EBAY REGULAR
- CAR BOOT SALE BARGAIN



5200
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30**
Unpopular successor to the 2600, regarded as an Atari 400 without a keyboard.

- RESCUE ON FRACTALUS
- DIG DUG
- ZAXXON



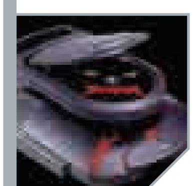
7800
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 - £40**
Handily, Atari made the 7800 backwards compatible with the ever popular 2600.

- KARATEKA
- CHOPLIFTER
- WINTER GAMES



JAGUAR
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20**
Failed attempt to beat the PlayStation and Saturn in the console race. Few decent games. But it does have Jeff Minter's *Tempest*!

- TEMPEST 2000
- ALIEN VS PREDATOR
- BATTLESPHERE (RARE AND EXPENSIVE!)



JAGUAR CD
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70**
Rare and overpriced CD add-on for the Jaguar. Very few games, but it does look very much like a toilet seat!

- BATTLEMORPH CD
- HIGHLANDER CD
- TEMPEST 2000 MUSIC CD



LYNX I/II (2ND IS SMALLER)
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15**
Powerful handheld from Atari that failed due to poor marketing and battery life.

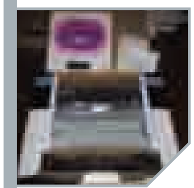
- BLUE LIGHTNING
- CALIFORNIA GAMES
- DIRTY LARRY RENEGADE COP



ST
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 depending on model**
Atari home computer and a big rival to the Amiga. There are many different models of various specifications.

- DUNGEON MASTER
- POPULOUS
- DAMOCLES

BANDAI



GUNDAM RX-78 COMPUTER
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£75 (prices fluctuate wildly)**
Ultra rare, early Japanese games computer by Bandai. Aimed at both gamers and anime fans. Expect to pay a much higher price for a machine that's in mint condition.



PLAYDIA
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£90 and upwards according to eBay**
Bizarre Japan-only console, apparently made for kids.

- SAILOR MOON
- ULTRAMAN
- DRAGON BALL Z



PIPPIN(ATMARK)
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £500+**
A strange hybrid system from Bandai and Apple. Very expensive and with very few games available. It's high price means that it's normally only sought after by collectors.

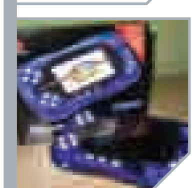
- RACING DAYS
- DRAGON BALL Z
- GUNDAM TACTICS



WONDERSWAN (B/W)
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10**



WONDERSWAN COLOR
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20**



WONDERSWAN CRYSTAL
» YEAR **2000**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25**
Handheld system by Bandai, fairly popular. Can now be bought very cheaply, especially in Japan. Be sure to buy the SwanCrystal, which is basically an improved 'Color' model. Both colourised models can run B/W WS games.

- GUNPEY EX
- SWAN COLOSSEUM
- JUDGEMENT SILVERSWORD

COMMODORE



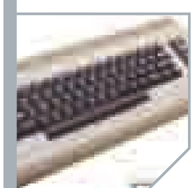
AMIGA500/600/1200
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 (more with games, depending on model)**
Classic and incredibly popular 16-bit home computer by Commodore, that was designed to compete against the Atari ST range. Vast array of different models, with differing specs, the Amiga 500 (with a RAM upgrade) is a particular favourite with many gamers.

- SPEEDBALL 2: BRUTAL DELUXE
- LEMMINGS
- SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER



C16/PLUS 4
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 - £30**
The less well known sibling of the C64, but without the compatibility of its peers.

- TUTTI FRUTTI
- MONTY ON THE RUN
- KIKSTART



C64
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 - £30**
One of the best selling 8-bit home computers of all time. Competed against the Spectrum and Amstrad home computers. Featured the wonderful SID sound chip that was put to amazing use by the likes of Ben Daglish and Rob Hubbard.

- WIZBALL
- MAYHEM IN MONSTERLAND
- PARADROID



C64 GS (GAMES SYSTEM)
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £30**
Commodore's cartridge-based machine that tried to take on both Nintendo and Sega. Sadly failed due to a lack of support from most publishers.

- PANG
- NAVY SEALS
- BATTLE COMMAND

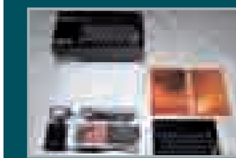


C128
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 - £50**
Three machines (CPM, C64 and C128) in one box. Specialised software is relatively small in number.

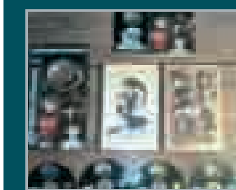


CDTV
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20**
Commodore aimed for the 'every home should have one' market and missed by a country

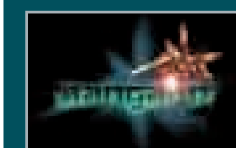
ZX SPECTRUM 48K
(Boxed)
Normally sells for **£15 +**
Ended at **£43.70**



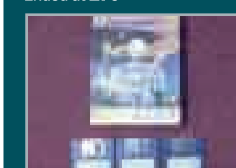
PANZER DRAGOON SAGA
Saturn
Normally sells for **£100**
Ended at **£70.00**



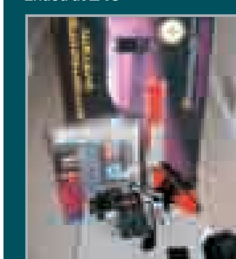
BANGAI-O
Dreamcast
Normally sells for **£5**
Ended at **£16.01**



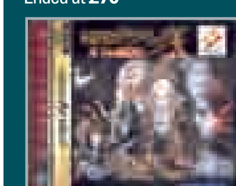
MOONSTONE
Amiga
Normally sells for **£45 +**
Ended at **£70**



NES CONSOLE
(Boxed)
Normally sells for **£15 +**
Ended at **£48**



CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT
Saturn
Normally Sells for **£30 +**
Ended at **£70**



mile. A curious mixture of games and educational material.



CD32
» YEAR **1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25**

CD-based console that followed on from the experimental CDTV. Sometimes described as a consolised Amiga 1200 with CD drive. Despite featuring some extremely impressive games, the majority failed to improve on their 500 and 1200 counterparts.

- EXILE
- SIMON THE SORCERER
- ALIEN BREED 3D



VIC-20
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 - £30 depending on condition/extras**

The computer that established Commodore brand.

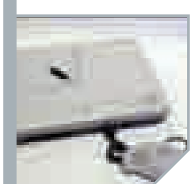
- HELLGATE
- SERPENTINE
- SUPER SMASH

FUJITSU



FUJITSU FM COMPUTERS
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100+**

Early Nineties home computers by Fujitsu, which could read CDs.



FUJITSU FM TOWNS MARTY
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£200+**

A legendary console, which contains both a CD and disk drive. Based on Fujitsu's old FM Towns computers, and mostly backwards compatible with the majority of games. Very expensive, (especially if you find a machine in mint condition), but with a lot of chic!

- ZAK MC KRAKEN
- TATSUJIN OU
- SCAVENGER 4

MISCELLANEOUS



BALLY ASTROCADE
» YEAR **1978**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20**

Early videogame system that used interchangeable cartridges, developed by the Bally games division at Midway Games.

- GATE ESCAPE
- ICBM ATTACK
- TREASURE COVE



BARCODE BATTLER
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£5**

Handheld LCD game, where you must swipe barcoded cards (or barcodes taken from soup packets!) to gather stats, and then battle against someone else who swiped barcodes. We're not making this up…

–Razzle 214
– Diet Coke with Lime 500ml
– Heinz Ravioli 410g



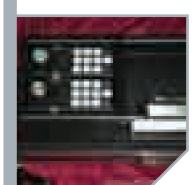
CASIO LOOPY
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25**

More inanity from the land of the rising sun. This is a console designed especially for female gamers and it even allows stickers to be printed out… Casio hoped it would do better than their failed PV-1000 console released in 1983.



FAIRCHILD CHANNEL F
» YEAR **1976**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 (from the USA)**

The first commercially released console that used programmable cartridges. A real piece of history. Despite this, it's surprisingly cheap to purchase (although importing from the US may cost a fair amount).



COLECOVISION
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 standalone**

Coleco's third generation videogame system. Quite a few decent games, and considering its age it's a fairly powerful machine. Many of its arcade conversions were considered superior to the other systems on the market.

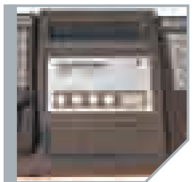
-CONGO BONGO
- SMURPH RESCUE
- CABBAGE PATCH KIDS



DRAGON 32/64
» YEAR **1982/3**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£8 (very cheap on eBay)**

Early British home computer that tried to cash in on the early 1980s boom. Short-lived though quite popular. The 64 model was released roughly a year after the 32.

- GRID RUNNER
- DEVIL ASSAULT
- CAVE FIGHTER



ARCADIA 2001
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10**

Failed console by Emmerson, which had numerous different clones released as well.

- FUNKY FISH
- JUNGLER
- ROBOT ATTACK



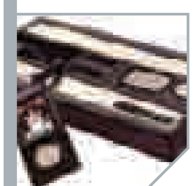
EPOCH CASSETTE VISION
» YEAR **1981**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20**

Obscure early Japanese console, which in 1983 had a budget 'Junior' model released.



EPOCH SUPER CASSETTE VISION
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30**

Epoch's successor to the Cassette Vision, which was also marketed in Europe under the Yeno label. Apparently it only had around 30 games released for it.



INTELLIVISION
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 upwards depending on extras**

Developed by Mattel, the system was revolutionary. It was the first console to be technically 16-bit, go online (to download games), and it featured voice synthesis. Today it still has a strong retro following.

- FROG BOG
- ARMOR BATTLE
- LOCK 'N' CHASE



ODYSSEY
» YEAR **1972**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10**

The original home videogame console, even before Atari got in on the act! Created by Ralph Baer, this is the ultimate piece of gaming history. Fortunately, it can be purchased relatively cheaply.



PLAYSTATION
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 depending on condition/model**

Another attempt by Sony to enter the videogame hardware market (after the MSX), this time they took over the market. There are countless undocumented yet excellent PS games. Was later re-released as the PSOne, which is more expensive, but looks much nicer in design.

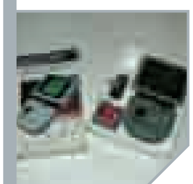
- CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT
- FINAL FANTASY VII
- RIDGE RACER



SAM COUPE
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 - £200 (allegedly for a mint complete system)**

Originally developed by Miles Gordon Technology in Swansea, the Sam Coupe was a unique 8-bit British home computer which didn't fare very well. It could even emulate the 48K Speccy to a degree.

- DEFENDERS OF THE EARTH
- ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE ROBOT MONSTERS
- PRINCE OF PERSIA



SUPERVISION
» YEAR **1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15**

Marketed by several different companies, this was essentially a cut-price competitor to the monochrome Game Boy. Unsurprisingly, it was not manufactured for very long and is now hard to find.

- ALIEN
- HONEY BEE
- POLICE BUST



TIGER ELEC. GAME.COM
» YEAR **1997**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15**

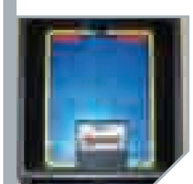
Attempt by Tiger Electronics to compete against the Game Boy.

- RESIDENT EVIL 2
- SONIC JAM
- DUKE NUKEM 3D



TOMY TUTOR (MK1/JR/MK2)
» YEAR **1983/4**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10**

Series of old computers by Tomy.



VECTREX (MB/GCE)
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80**

The only home system ever to come with a vector display, enabling true vector graphics.

- SPACE WAR
- SPINBALL
- HYPERCHASE



X68000
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£90 upwards**

Home computer by Sharp, released only in Japan. Famous for its arcade ports.

- CASTLEVANIA CHRONICLES
- STREET FIGHTER 2
- FINAL FIGHT

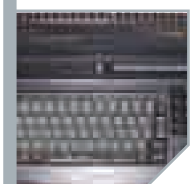
MSX



MSX 1
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 - £30**
An early attempt to create a standard gaming platform, fairly common in the UK.
- PENGUIN ADVENTURE
- KNIGHTMARE
- THE GOONIES



MSX 2
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 - £50**
Updated and more powerful version of the MSX, very popular in Holland and Brazil where even today some excellent homebrew games are developed.
- METAL GEAR 2
- ALESTE 2
- VAMPIRE KILLER

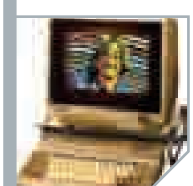


MSX 2+
» YEAR **1988**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 - £50**
Another hardware update that proved to be very popular in Holland.
- SPACE MANBOW
- GOLVELLIUS 2
- F1 SPIRIT 3D SPECIAL



MSX TURBO R
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 - £90**
A final and not very popular hardware update, that was virtually exclusive to Japan.
- FRAY
- PRINCESS MAKER
- ILLUSION CITY

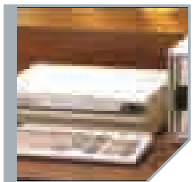
NEC



PC-6### (ALSO MK II)
» YEAR **1984 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10-£50 depending on model**
Quite old 6000 series of home computers by NEC, with a lot of very cool Japanese games for it. Released in the USA as the NEC Trek. While fairly cheap, be careful of shipping prices.



PC-8801
» YEAR **1981 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 (cheap on Yahoo! Japan)**
Old computer series by NEC, with several different models over the years. Has a massive roster of cool games, including the original *Silpheed*. While very cheap to buy online from Japan, shipping is expensive.



PC-9801
» YEAR **1983 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 (cheap on Yahoo! Japan)**
Another home computer series by NEC, again with many great games. Laptop versions also exist. Most games by Falcom are worth watching out for.



PCFX
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 prices can fluctuate**
32-bit tower console by NEC, resembles a PC. Released in Japan only, had software support until 1998. Only a few action titles. Apparently, it also had quite a bit of hentai on it.
- LAST IMPERIAL PRINCE
- CHOUJIN HEIKI ZEROIGAR (SHMUP)
- ZENKI FX (FIGHTER)



PC-ENGINE
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£55**
Classic piece of Japanese hardware from NEC which features many excellent arcade ports and a few exclusives. The CoreGrafx system is basically a PC-Engine with AV output.



PC-ENGINE GT
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70 depending on extras**
Portable handheld version of the Japanese PC-Engine that played all Japanese Hu-Cards.



TURBO GRAFX-16
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 (can be found quite cheap)**
American version of the PC-Engine. It has territory lockout, so the two system's Hu-Cards are not mutually compatible.



TURBO EXPRESS
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 (massive fluctuations)**
Portable handheld version of the American Turbo Grafx-16.
- BONK/PC KID SERIES
- BLOODY WOLF
- NINJA SPIRIT



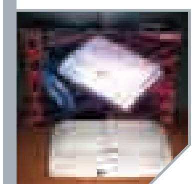
SUPER GRAFX
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 (prices can fluctuate)**
Meant to be the successor to the original PC-Engine, but sadly failed due to lack of games. It is backwards compatible, but only had 6 games specifically released for it.
- ALDYNES
- DARIUS PLUS
- GHOULS AND GHOSTS



PCE CD-ROM/ TURBO GRAFX CD
» YEAR **1988**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 upwards**
CD-ROM add-on for the PCE and TG16, released in 1988 and 1989. It has no region lockout.



PCE DUO/TURBO DUO
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£120**
System that combines the PCE/TG16 with its CD add-on. Released in both Japan and America in 1991 and 1992. The CD games still have no region lockout.

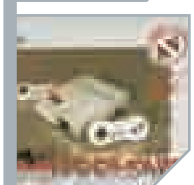


DUO-R
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80**
Stripped down white version of the PCE Duo, without headphone port. Later in 1994 a Duo-RX version was released, slightly blue in colour and came with a 6 button control pad.
- DRACULA X
- SHUBIBINMAN 3
- LORDS OF THUNDER

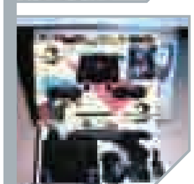
NINTENDO



FAMICOM
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£60**
Nintendo's first foray into the home console market, with over a 1000 games to choose from!



FAMICOM AV
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40**
A cheaper remodelled version of the Famicom, now with AV output.



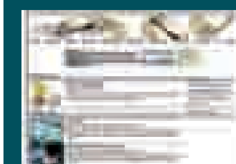
FAMICLONE
» YEAR **N/A**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10**
Mass-produced pirate versions of the Famicom system. Virtually infinite different designs.
- CRISIS FORCE
- SWEET HOME
- HAUNG DI



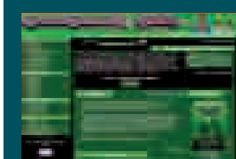
FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70**
Nintendo's attempt to bring cheap rewritable disk-based gaming to the masses. Be warned, the drive belts break very easily.

RETRO GAMING SITES

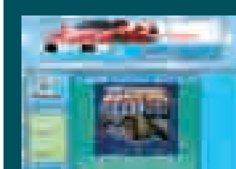
NTSC-UK
While NTSC-UK deals with the latest import games, it also features a dedicated Retro forum that's full of knowledgeable members. The main site also features some very good retrospectives; well worth a quick visit.
www.nstc-uk.com



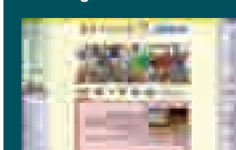
RETROGAMING RADIO
It's time we mentioned Mr Monroe's excellent site, so head to Retrogaming Retro and listen to his latest show. There are some impressive archives that feature all his old shows and rarities like US gaming mags – **www.retrogamingradio.com**

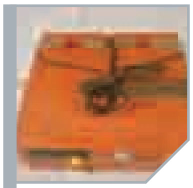


OUTRUN.ORG
A great resource for lovers of Sega's franchise. Site owner Rogelio Tristan doesn't update it as often as he used to, but with the wealth of info there this isn't really a problem. Add in an *Afterburner* and *Space Harrier* section and it's essential for Sega fans.
www.outrun.org



THE VIDEO GAME MUSEUM
The pop-up ads are bloody annoying, but there's a ridiculous amount of good stuff to uncover at this marvellous site. Scans, screenshots, game endings, machines, the list of available material is endless – **http://www.vgmuseum.com/**





SHARP FAMICOM TWIN
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100**

Combined Famicom and Disk System, by Sharp. Comes in two colours, black and pink.
- OTOCKY
- NAZO NO MURASAMEJOU
- PATLABOR



GAME&WATCH
» YEAR **1980-1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£1 - £200**

Series of handheld LCD games that were created by the legendary Gunpei Yoko.



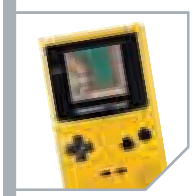
GAME BOY B/W
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£5**

Nintendo's original handheld portable, with interchangeable cartridges. Despite it's age, and monochrome display, there are many excellent classic GB games.



GAME BOY POCKET
» YEAR **1996**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£8**

A smaller and more compact GB, with improved screen. A Japanese version with built-in light was released and sells for a much higher price.
- SUPER MARIO LAND
- TETRIS
- POKÉMON



GAME BOY COLOR
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£12**

Colour-based version of the classic GB. Backwards compatible, but it also has several exclusive games that were rather special.
- METAL GEAR SOLID: GHOST BABEL
- RESIDENT EVIL GAIDEN
- HARVEST MOON 3



GAME BOY ADVANCE
» YEAR **2001**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25**



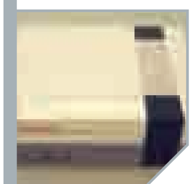
N64
» YEAR **1996**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10**

Nintendo's last cartridge based console, competitor to the PlayStation and Saturn. Has several highly sought after classics. Some games (like *Donkey Kong*) require the RAM expansion pack and wouldn't run without it.
- SIN & PUNISHMENT
- PILOTWINGS 64
- BLAST CORPS



N64 DD
» YEAR **1999**
» » RARITY
» PRICE **£150 and upwards!**

Another attempt by Nintendo to incorporate disc media with one of their cartridge-based consoles. Expensive and very few games were released.
- F-ZERO EXPANSION KIT
- MARIO ARTIST SERIES
- DOSHIN THE GIANT



NES (TOASTER)
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15**

The Western version of the Famicom, popular the world over. Plenty of great Nintendo classics to choose from, and very cheap too.



NES (DOG BONE)
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50**

Remodelled and improved version of the traditional NES. Region lockout was also removed, meaning all 72 pin based NES games work.
- VICE: PROJECT DOOM
- SNAKE'S REVENGE
- SUPER MARIO BROS. 3



SNES (SUPER FAMICOM IN JAPAN)
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20**

Nintendo's successor to the NES, and one of their most popular machines. A retro staple with a fantastic selection of games.



SNES 2 (KNOWN AS 'JR' IN JPN)
» YEAR **1997**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 - £100**

Cheaper and redesigned SNES.
- SUPER METROID
- SECRET OF MANA
- SUPER MARIO WORLD



VIRTUAL BOY
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80**

Nintendo's failed attempt at a pseudo Virtual Reality games system. Quite a novelty as there is nothing else like it. Be warned though, as many gamers have complained that the machine gives them headaches.
- INSMOUSE NO YAKATA (HP LOVECRAFT INSPIRED FPS)
- WARIO LAND
- RED ALARM

PHILIPS



CD-I 205/210/220
» YEAR **from1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 (more with Digital Video Card)**

Unique system by Philips.The 200 series consists of front loading systems, with each one having slightly different specifications.



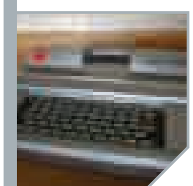
CD-I 450/490/740
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 (more with DVC)**

Consolised version of previous models, requires a different '9956' DVC.
- THE APPRENTICE
- BURN CYCLE
- HOTEL MARIO



VIDEOPAC G7000
» YEAR **1978**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10**

Popular across the world (especially Brazil and Holland) and known also as the 'Odyssey 2'.



VIDEOPAC G7400
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20**

A successor to the G7000, that was backwards compatible.
- QUEST FOR RINGS
- PICKAXE PETE
- MUNCHKIN

SEGA



32X
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 (must have RF + Mains)**

Failed Mega Drive add-on, designed to enhance it's capabilities.
- KNUCKLES CHAOTIX
- KOLIBRI
- DARXIDE



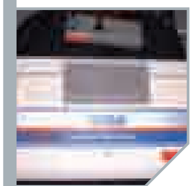
DREAMCAST
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 depending on extras**

Sega's final hardware release. No gamer should be without it. Amazing official roster of games, plus it can emulate older systems.
- IKARUGA
- CRAZY TAXI
- REZ



GAME GEAR
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 more with extras**

Handheld by Sega, designed to compete against the Game Boy. Low battery life, but effectively a portable Master System. Could also be used as a TV (as shown here).
- SHINOBI 2
- COLUMNS
- TV TUNER



SG-1000 (PLUS THE MARK II AND III)
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20-£50**

Sega's first console, and a piece of history! The Mark III model would later be redesigned to become the Master System. Like the Japanese Famicom, it's much nicer than the UK version.



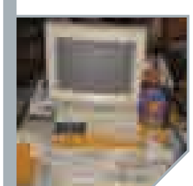
SC-3000
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £50**

Computer equivalent of the SG-1000, also by Sega. Was popular in Australia and other ex-colonies. Mutually compatible with the SG-1000 as well.



MASTER SYSTEM I/II
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 with leads etc.**

Popular Sega 8-bit console, which competed against the NES. Adapted from previous systems.
- PHANTASY STAR
- WONDER BOY 3: DRAGON'S TRAP
- NINJA GAIDEN



AMSTRAD MEGA PC
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10.50 (according to eBay)**

A strange hybrid between an Amstrad PC and a Mega Drive. A nice collectable oddity, though according to past eBay auctions, not a high seller.



TERADRIVE
» YEAR **1991**
» » RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £100**

Another Mega Drive computer

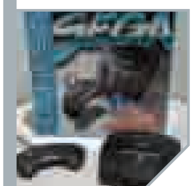
hybrid. Released earlier than the Amstrad hybrid, these systems have no connection. Due to being exclusive to Japan, they are seldom seen in the wild. Likely to be very expensive if you are able to find one.



MEGA DRIVE/ GENESIS I/II

» YEAR **1989+**
» RARITY
» » PRICE **£10 depending on model**

The big daddy, Sega's most successful console and a retro classic.



GENESIS 3

» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35**

Developed by Majesco. This third, cut-down model is rarer and has some compatibility issues. USA only.

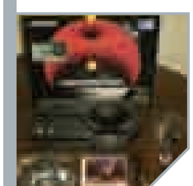


NOMAD

» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100**

Handheld Mega Drive. Pricey, low battery life and some compatibility problems.

- RANGER-X
- THUNDER FORCE IV
- COMIX ZONE



MULTIMEGA/ WONDERMEGA/

» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100+ depending on system** CDX/Xeye

A series of different hybrid MD and MCD systems, released in the three main territories.



MEGA CD (SCD) I/II

» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 depending on system**

Sega's CD add-on for the Mega Drive. Despite heavy criticism, has many excellent games.

- POPFUL MAIL
- SNATCHER
- SONIC CD



PICO

» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 (more with games)**

Toy computer released for young children. The games come in nice storybook style boxes.

- SONIC'S GAMEWORLD
- ECCO JR. AND THE GREAT OCEAN HUNT
- THE LION KING: ADVENTURES AT PRIDE ROCK



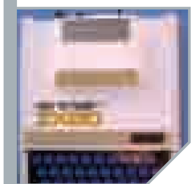
SATURN

» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30**

Sega's competition against the PlayStation and N64. A real 2D powerhouse, that despite an amazing catalogue of games never really took off.

- SATURN BOMBERMAN
- GUARDIAN HEROES
- DRAGON FORCE

SINCLAIR



ZX-80

» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£200 Apparently if boxed and mint**

Very early British home computer from Sinclair. Low capability meant limited gaming possibilities. Now extremely hard to get hold of.

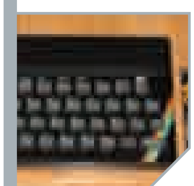


ZX-81

» YEAR **1981**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £70 if mint**

Improved home computer from Sinclair, with black and white ASCII graphics. Not as hard to source as a ZX-80, but still commands a respectable price.

- 3D MONSTER MAZE
- MAZOGS
-SABOTAGE



ZX SPECTRUM 48K

» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10**



ZX SPECTRUM 128K

» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40**



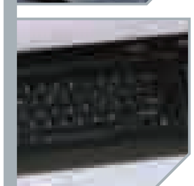
ZX SPECTRUM

» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35**



ZX SPECTRUM +2

» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35**



ZX SPECTRUM +3

» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40**

The British classic loved by many. A vast improvement over previous Sinclair computers, it was normally compared against the C64 and Amstrad home computers, which in turn caused many playground arguments over who had the better machine.

- HEAD OVER HEELS
- 3D DEATHCHASE
- SKOOL DAZE

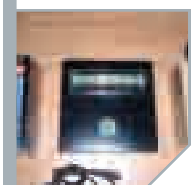
SNK



NEOGEO AES

» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£150 and upwards**

High powered home system by SNK. Features many high quality arcade games. Sadly, due to the high price of the original games, many titles are now ridiculously expensive to purchase.

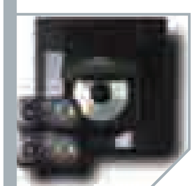


NEOGEO MVS

» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £70 (multi-slot systems cost more)**

High powered arcade system by SNK, which many people prefer over the home based AES due to lower pricing of games. (The majority of NeoGeo titles appeared on both systems, or alternatively can be converted).

- METAL SLUG
- KING OF FIGHTERS ##
- WAKU WAKU 7



NEOGEO CD

» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 varies**

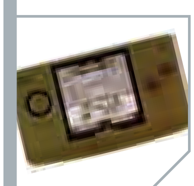


NEOGEO CDZ

» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 varies**

CD-based NeoGeo systems, an attempt by SNK to lower the cost of NeoGeo games. The CDZ is cheaper and has slightly improved loading times. Most CD titles are ports from the AES/MVS.

- VIEWPOINT
- AGGRESSORS OF DARK COMBAT
- SAMURAI SHOWDOWN RPG



NEOGEO POCKET (B/W)

» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20**



NEOGEO POCKET COLOR

» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35**

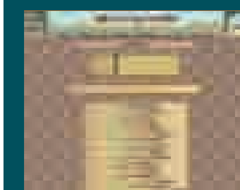
Handheld NeoGeo systems by SNK, that sadly failed to compete with the Game Boy, despite featuring some great games. Still a wonderful little system though. Be sure to buy the later colour screen model.

- FASELEI!
- CARD FIGHTERS (CAPCOM/SNK)
- MATCH OF THE MILLENNIUM (CAP VS SNK)

RETRO GAMING SITES

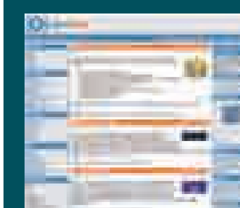
ARCADE HISTORY DATABASE

As its name suggests this is a great place to find out interesting nuggets of information about your favourite arcade titles. Want to know what *Gradius* and *Contra* were called in the UK, or how many different versions of *1942* were released? All the answers can be found here.
http://www.arcade-history.com



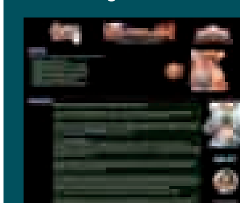
ATARI AGE

Another month and another plug for Atari Age, one of the coolest Atari resource sites around. If you're a lover of all things Atari and want to share your interest with fellow passionate gamers, there really is no better place to go.
www.atariage.com



NEO-GEO.COM

Ignore the naysayers who will tell you that Neo-Geo.com is full of elitist owners – they're probably just jealous… What you get is a group of extremely knowledgeable forum members, plenty of useful reviews, a handy price guide and masses of screenshots to drool over. A wonderful site.
www.neo-geo.com



Special thanks to **lofi-gaming-org.uk** who supplied several of our screenshots

RETROINSPECTION

Nintendo's Game Boy range has constantly evolved over the last 18 years – Retro Gamer returns to when the machine appeared in colour for the very first time



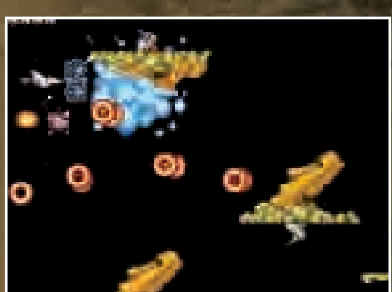


GP32

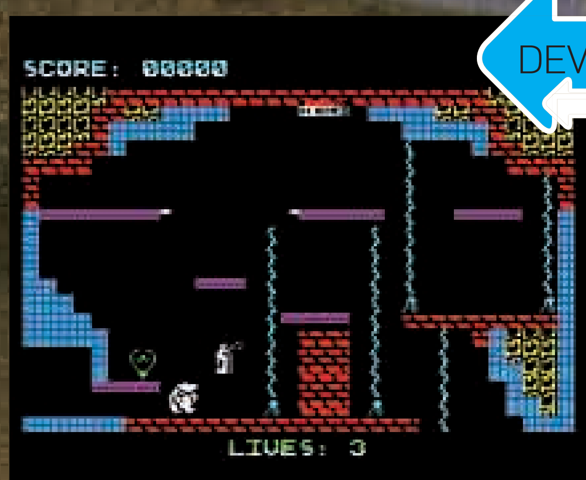
Emulation Nation: Can't afford a GP2X just yet? Then don't worry, as there's still plenty of life in the GP32. Our in-depth look at its best emulators should be just the ticket you need

RETRO FEATURE

The *Gradius* franchise has enthralled shoot-'em-up lovers for over two decades. Stuart Campbell climbs into his Vic Viper to bring you its definitive history



DEVELOPER LOOKBACK



GREMLIN GRAPHICS

Wanted moles, things on springs and deranged infants – just a few of the bizarre characters that made up Gremlin Graphics' expansive portfolio

NEXT MONTH

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retro GAMER

TIMEWARP GAMING FOR RETRO ENTHUSIASTS

THE MAKING OF…

ANOTHER WORLD

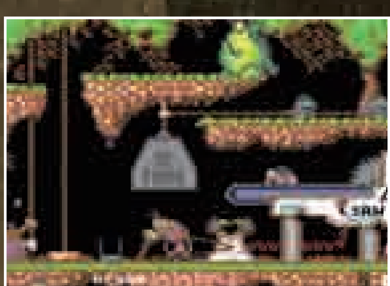
Delphine Software's *Another World* brought a dream-like quality to the Amiga that many gamers had never witnessed. Retro Gamer uncovers its fascinating creation

AND THE REST…

Reviews
In the Chair with…
Full of Eastern Promise
News
Back to the 80s
And much, much more

THE MAKING OF…

John Rowlands talks to Retro Gamer about *Creatures*, quite possibly one of the cutest platform shooters that Commodore 64 owners ever got the pleasure to play



EUGENE JARVIS

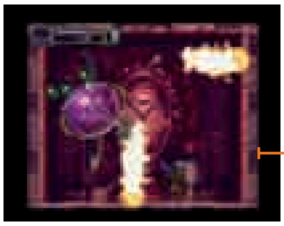
His games have been the choice of many a castaway; now it's time for the creator of *Robotron*, Smash TV and *Defender* to choose his own Desert Island Disks



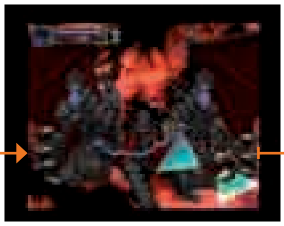


CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT

For many gamers, Konami's *Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night* is the best game in the franchise. Konami's last 2D epic – before all those horrible 3D versions started to appear – finishes with Alucard finally reaching the inner sanctuary of Dracula's inverted castle. Prepare for pain…



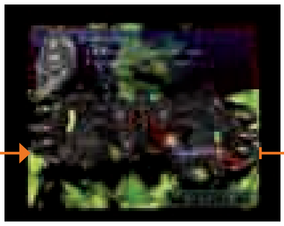
SCREEN 1
Before you get to go one-on-one with Dracula, it's time to sort out his right hand man, the evil priest Shaft. Luckily, he's not too much trouble and you'll soon have him blubbing like a baby.



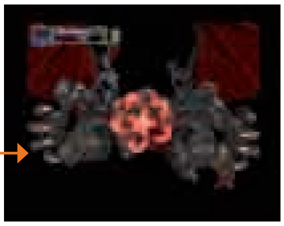
SCREEN 2
With Shaft disposed of it's time to take on the dark prince, and he's an utter pig to defeat. Watch out for his vicious claws and deadly bite attack and give him what for.



SCREEN 3
It wasn't easy, but after a tense battle the prince of darkness is defeated by his son Alucard. In typical evil villain tradition, the arrogant count immediately questions his defeat.



SCREEN 4
As Alucard sternly lectures him on all his wrongdoings, Dracula begins to lament his recent actions and starts pining for his dead wife Lisa. Alas, by the time he realises his folly it's far too late.



SCREEN 5
It's not been an easy journey, but the dreaded Dracula has finally been defeated. Now all you have to do is sit back, put your feet up, enjoy the ending and pray for *Symphony Of The Night 2*.